

Saturday, April 3, 1999

Mobile phone site does robber in

King to meet with Arafat on Sunday

AMMAN (AFP) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will pay a short visit to Jordan on Sunday to brief His Majesty King Abdullah on the results of a world tour to drum up support for a Palestinian state, the Palestinian embassy here said Saturday. Arafat will present the outcome of his talks with U.S. and European leaders about his intention to declare an independent Palestinian state on May 4 when the five-year interim period of the Oslo peace accords expires, Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Omar Khatib told AFP. Khatib said the two leaders will also discuss "Israeli-imposed obstacles" to implementing Israeli-Palestinian peace accords.

Official sentenced to death over bridge collapse

BEIJING (AP) — In a nationally televised live court case about a bridge collapse that shocked China, a court sentenced a local Communist Party official to death and 12 others to prison terms ranging from three to 13 years on Saturday. The No. 1 Intermediate People's Court in Chongqing, a city in southwestern China, sentenced Lin Shiyuan, 37, to death for accepting bribes and dereliction of duty, state television news reported. The Jan. 4 collapse of a three-year-old bridge outside Chongqing killed at least 40 people and injured 14.

Russian helicopter crash kills three

MOSCOW (AP) — A military helicopter crashed in southern Russia on Saturday, killing all three crew members, a news report said. The helicopter crashed near the village of Kuntorka, located in the Caucasus republic of Dagestan, the Itar-Tass news agency said. Investigators said the helicopter hit a power line while escorting a military train, Itar-Tass reported.

Records of Gandhi assassination case possibly destroyed

CHANDIGARH (AP) — A devastating fire that gutted the record room in the high court of India's northern Punjab and Haryana states may have destroyed, among files of thousands of old cases, records of the assassination trial of Indian independence leader Mohandas Gandhi. Judge G.S. Singhvi of the Punjab-Haryana high court said an inquiry had been ordered into the cause of the fire. He did not rule out the possibility of sabotage. Last month, the union government had indicated it may reopen Gandhi assassination case after Gopal Godse, the brother of Gandhi's assassin, filed an appeal in the supreme court for a fresh investigation.

Protest against U.S.-Japan military relations

TOKYO (AP) — More than 600 people marched through central Tokyo on Saturday to protest a set of bills in parliament that could significantly expand Japan's military alliance with the United States. Anti-war activists and leaders of groups opposed to the U.S. troop presence in Japan called on the government to scrap the so-called "defence guideline" bills, arguing that such laws would violate the nation's pacifist constitution. The bills would allow Japan's armed forces to provide more support for U.S. troops, join in search-and-rescue operations and use civilian harbours and airports during military emergencies.

Vacuum cleaner saves pensioner

TOKYO (R) — An 80-year-old Japanese man choking on "devil's tongue" was saved by a quick-thinking emergency medical worker and a relative who dislodged the stuck food with a vacuum cleaner, fire officials said on Saturday. The pensioner living in suburban Osaka was eating sukiyaki on Friday night with his family when the chewy food got lodged in his throat, they said. The dispatcher instructed the man's 25-year-old granddaughter on the proper way to insert the vacuum cleaner tube into the choking man's mouth. "The use of the vacuum cleaner was the absolute last resort," a local fire official said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Volume 24 Number 7110

AMMAN SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 1999, DHUL HILJA 18, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Rawabdeh delivers Cabinet's policy statement to House Government pledges measures to pull economy out of 'recession'

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government pledged on Saturday to pull the economy out of recession by speeding up IMF-agreed free market reforms and eliminating red tape, boosting investment and clamping down on corrupt officials.

In a statement to Parliament which will be the focus of a several-day confidence debate set to start on Tuesday, Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh also indirectly blamed Israel for the deadlocked Middle East peace process and pledged backing for a future Palestinian state, with Arab east Jerusalem as its capital.

Rawabdeh's remarks on the economy, the focus of the premier's 90-minute speech, included a rare public acknowledgement that the country has indeed fallen into an economic recession.

Jordan posted negative growth last year, the worst performance since a 1989 eco-

nomical crunch, blamed mainly on Middle East peace uncertainty and lack of bold economic moves.

Officials have said the economy grew by around two per cent in 1998 while independent economists forecast a one per cent shrinkage in the economy last year.

"We have passed from a period of slow growth to a period of recession. Every single person can feel the stagnation," Rawabdeh said, promising "urgent measures to get growth back."

"The solution is not easy nor will it come in a short while, and it might take difficult measures," the premier told the 80-member House.

Rawabdeh said the national strategy to overcome the country's economic hardships included four major points, namely improving the investment environment to create more jobs, improving the performance of the public sector, treating poverty and unemployment and continuing a

policy of openness towards the outside world.

Officials say that 16 per cent of Jordan's 4.6 million population are unemployed, while an independent survey conducted in 1996 put the figure at 27 per cent. A third of Jordan's population are living below the poverty line.

Rawabdeh said his government will seek to solve unemployment by reducing foreign labour in Jordan, upgrading working conditions and negotiating with Gulf states to employ more Jordanians.

He noted that attracting more investment to the country will also help in solving the jobs issue.

The premier said that in order to encourage exports of Jordanian-made products, the government will reduce the ceiling on customs duties, especially on industrial outputs in order to reduce production costs.

Rawabdeh, the first premier appointed under the reign of His Majesty King Abdullah,

said the government is negotiating with foreign countries to reschedule, scrap or convert into grants the Kingdom's \$6.8 billion debt.

The government will proceed with the controversial privatisation process, Rawabdeh said. Privatisation, which has received little support from Parliament, falls in line with the economic restructuring programme the Kingdom agreed to with international financial institutions in the early 1990s.

According to the prime minister, the government will set the framework for the privatisation process and will convert the Privatisation Unit at the Prime Ministry into an independent corporation that will handle the issue in the future.

He said the government will consult with the House before taking decisions on privatisation of public-sector firms and the restructuring of the Kingdom's national airline.

(Continued on page 2)

Serbs defiant after NATO strike on downtown Belgrade, second bridge G-8; Contact Group to meet next week; NATO toughens demands

Agencies

SERBIA REACTED with shock and defiance Saturday to a missile attack on the heart of its capital ordered by a NATO desperate to halt the "demographic earthquake" rocking the Balkans.

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's military and political chiefs issued a statement after eight cruise missiles destroyed the Yugoslav and Serbian interior ministries in Belgrade saying that NATO "cannot break the spirit" of the country.

Russia, too, denounced NATO's "act of barbarity" and called again for an end to "NATO aggression" and the start of negotiations on the Kosovo crisis.

It was the first NATO attack on Belgrade since the start of the allied air and missile campaign on March 24 — and the first time since the end of WW II that a European capital has been bombed.

NATO air strikes felled another bridge over the Danube on Saturday, cutting one of Yugoslavia's key communications lines.

Yugoslav state television reported that NATO jets had destroyed the bridge at Novi Sad, the main city of northern Serbia.

Another bridge in the city was destroyed early on Thursday, cutting the Orient Express railway route between Vienna and Belgrade and blocking barge traffic on Europe's longest waterway, the Danube.

State television showed the bridge with a large gap in the middle span. It said civilians were crossing when the bombers struck.

Diplomatic moves provoked by the crisis are gathering strength: the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialised nations — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States — is to meet next week straight after a meeting of the six-nation Contact Group on Yugoslavia — G-8 minus Canada and Japan.

The Italian Foreign Ministry said the meetings had been

agreed in telephone conversations late Friday between Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and the British, French and German foreign ministers.

"Italy and its Western partners in the Contact Group studied the proposal of Russian President Boris Yeltsin to hold a meeting of the G-7/G-8 on the Kosovo crisis to look for a political solution to the conflict," the ministry said.

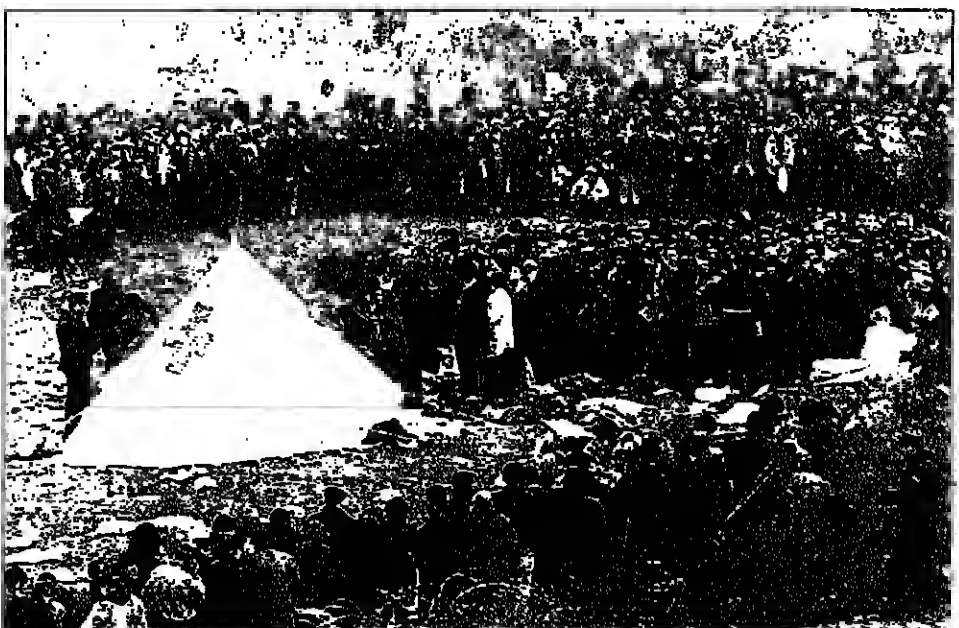
Meanwhile, NATO spokesman Jamie Shea said the Serb army and police have

caused a "demographic earthquake" by forcing 200,000 ethnic Albanians out of Kosovo since March 24.

He warned: "At this rate, the Serb security forces would have emptied Kosovo between 10 and 20 days from now."

NATO said it launched the missile attack from U.S. and British warships to rip apart the command structure of the Serb paramilitary police it says is primarily responsible for "ethnically cleansing" Kosovo of its 1.5 million ethnic Albanians.

(Continued on page 2)



Hundreds of ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo queue up on Saturday to be registered by the Red Cross in a camp at the Yugoslav-Macedonian border in Blace. The Macedonian government closed the border on Saturday claiming that could not cope with the flow of refugees (AFP photo)



Their Majesties King Abdullah and Queen Rania meet with the visiting U.S. congressional delegation on Saturday (Petra photo)

King, U.S. congressional team discuss Jordan-U.S. relations

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday held talks with a visiting U.S. congressional delegation on joint Jordanian-U.S. projects and voiced Jordan's appreciation of Congress' support for the Kingdom.

King Abdullah and the delegation, led by New York Representative Benjamin Gilman, discussed the government's development plans and prospects for further U.S. aid, particularly in the area of water resources.

The King outlined the government's plans to reform the national economy and noted that Jordan is seeking to promote regional cooperation.

Stressing that the success of the peace process is vital for the region, King Abdullah said that its failure would have neg-

ative effects on the social, economic and security situation in the Middle East and would constitute a real obstacle to stability, investment and development.

Present at the King's meeting with the congressional delegation were Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti, HRH Prince Talal Bin Mohammad, the King's advisor on national security affairs, and U.S. Ambassador William Burns.

Gilman and the delegation later visited the grave of the late King Hussein, where they laid a wreath.

Earlier on Saturday, the delegation met with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirza Kashghari, for talks on military cooperation between Jordan and the U.S.

During the meeting, the two sides also reviewed the role of the Jordan Armed Forces in contributing to world peace and security at the regional and international levels.

The 30-member U.S. delegation also visited the Nabataean city of Petra and was briefed on its history and the ongoing development projects in the nearby town of Wadi Musa.

The delegation visited a \$31 million water and sanitation project which is being financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

In remarks after the visit, Gilman expressed his country's pride in its strong ties with Jordan, noting that Jordan plays a key role in ensuring the stability and security of the region.

Israeli peace activists declare support for Palestinian statehood

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli peace activists presented a manifesto to the top Palestinian official in Arab east Jerusalem on Saturday recognising the Palestinians' right to declare a state and calling for Jerusalem to be the capital of both states.

The manifesto recognised the Palestinians' right to "proclaim the establishment of the state of Palestine in all the territories of the West Bank and Gaza, with Jerusalem as the joint capital of Israel and Palestine."

It was presented by the left-wing group Gush Shalom (Peace Bloc) to Faisal Hussein, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) minister for Jerusalem affairs and the head of Orient House, the semi-official PLO office in Arab east Jerusalem.

A short ceremony took place

after the presentation in Orient House in which some 100 peace activists participated.

Gush Shalom said it wanted to express its solidarity with the PNA after three of its offices were ordered to close last week in an Israeli government crackdown on alleged illegal Palestinian activity in Arab east Jerusalem.

Dozens of Gush Shalom activists marched from the American Colony Hotel in east Jerusalem to Orient House carrying banners with doves and Israeli and Palestinian flags depicted on them and slogans like "Jerusalem, the capital of two states."

The manifesto was signed by 520 Israelis including writers and academics. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's brother-in-law Matanya Ben-Arzi and the widow of the late Defence Minister Moshe

Dayan, Ruth.

One of the march's organisers, Uri Avnery, insisted more and more Israelis were prepared to accept a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

"There are more and more people in Israel who support a compromise for Jerusalem which should remain united but a capital of two states," he said.

Husseini said he was pleased to see courageous Israelis speaking out in support of Palestinian rights. "We see courageous hearts and minds who are able to speak on the rights of Palestinians," he told reporters.

Israel occupied east Jerusalem in 1967 and later illegally annexed it to Jewish west Jerusalem as the "united and eternal capital" of the state.

Analysts see renewed opportunity for Jordan to strengthen ties with Syria

By Rana Sabbagh Gargour

AMMAN — Syria and Jordan are sending clear signals they want better ties, but further improvement hinges on their ability to balance differences over Middle East peace and uneasy links with Turkey and Iran.

Both states have been trading gestures of goodwill since Syrian President Hafez Assad, in a surprise move, attended King Hussein's funeral on Feb. 8 — setting foot in Jordan for the first time since Amman angered Syria by signing the 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

By making a rare foray abroad,

Assad, a master strategist who had a history of uneasy ties with the late King Hussein, indicated that he wanted better relations with Jordan.

NEWS ANALYSIS

and that Syria is still interested in the Middle East peace process.

"Naturally, the Syrians are seeking to win over His Majesty King Abdullah and to get a better idea of his thinking after he ascended the Throne in a state that neighbours them and has always assumed an active role in regional politics," said an independent politician.

"Likewise, the King, who is starting a new era and has a natural and obvious interest in building good ties with Arab and foreign states, is reciprocating Syria's moves."

Over the past seven weeks, Syrian and Jordanian leaders have traded scores of emotionally-charged congratulatory cables on various national occasions, indicating that their fractured bilateral ties are on the mend.

Assad's son Bashar, being groomed to run Syria in the future, made an unprecedented trip to Amman last month to get to know King Abdullah, the first of a new generation of Middle East rulers.

Days later, Syria's state-run media and a Damascus-based, Iranian-backed alliance of eight Palestinian parties who oppose peace with Israel halted six years of routine criticism of Jordan to give diplomacy a chance.

These overtures contrast sharply with the bad state of Jordanian-Syrian affairs that escalated to such a level five months ago that even Egypt offered to mediate.

Syria, on the verge of a military clash with Turkey in early October, provoked Amman with accusations made by Defence Minister Mustafa Tlass that Jordan was trying to "Judaize" its people and that

Amman had obstructed the Saudi army from crossing into Jordan to aid Syria in defence of the Golan Heights during the 1973 war.

Amman, in turn, stepped up criticism of Syrian policies and adopted a more open campaign to win the release of more than 400 Jordanian prisoners held in Syrian jails, many for over three decades. Syria denies holding any Jordanians.

Despite the recent upbeat mood in both countries, many Jordanian officials say in private that years of serious underlying differences continue between the two neighbouring states over their regional roles.

Syrian attempts to meddle in Jor-

dan's internal affairs over the past decades and to transform the Kingdom into a client state like Lebanon, where Syria is the main power broker, remains an apprehension among Jordanian officials.

"We have told the Syrians on every occasion in the past that Jordan will not sacrifice its sovereignty or independence in return for any improvement in ties, and that any bilateral dealings have to be balanced and to be built on equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each others' affairs," a Cabinet minister told the Jordan Times.

(Continued on page 2)

New government pledges measures to pull economy out of 'recession'

(Continued from page 1)

Deputies have long complained that their views on privatisation were ignored, especially when the government signed on a strategic partner in the Jordan Cement Factory's privatisation last year and announced plans to privatise the Aqaba Railway Corporation.

Rawabdeh pledged to strengthen the monetary and financial environment in Jordan by reducing the deficit and trimming public spending.

Maintaining the value of the dinar is of utmost priority to the government, he said.

In 1989 the Kingdom's foreign reserves were totally depleted and the government was forced to seek financial backing from the International Monetary Fund to oversee an economic restructuring programme. The dinar had witnessed a sharp devaluation, but under the IMF adjustment programme the currency was stabilised and has remained steady against other currencies.

According to the premier, the Cabinet will soon present the House with two draft laws intended to upgrade the performance of commercial banks and insurance companies.

He said the Cabinet will work diligently to keep

prices stable and fend off inflation, thus helping to guarantee the public's purchasing power.

Rawabdeh pledged that the government will not hesitate to fight corruption and will refer to the courts those suspected of involvement in such offences.

Rawabdeh said the government will concentrate on oil prospecting, especially in the southern parts of the country, and make optimal use of power projects to cope with energy shortages.

Jordan receives all its oil and oil derivative needs from Iraq under a special arrangement with the U.N. Sanctions Committee.

Turning to the economically depressed agricultural sector, the prime minister said the government is keen to extend support in the form of soft loans to farmers and to formulate a national strategy for medium-size farmers.

On other issues, Rawabdeh said his government was determined to strengthen democracy and safeguard public freedoms, adding that the Cabinet is ready to enter into dialogue with opposition parties and professional unions to reach a consensus.

Many government watch-

He said a draft law would be introduced to ensure the independence of the judiciary and grant it a budget separate from that of the Justice Ministry.

On inter-Arab relations, a major challenge for the government, Rawabdeh said Jordan will strengthen its ties in general, but especially with Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian National Authority, and will spare no effort to lift the U.N. sanctions on Iraq, Libya and Sudan.

Rawabdeh said Jordan believes that some form of unity will emerge between the Palestinian and Jordanian peoples when the Palestinians establish an independent state on their national soil with Jerusalem as their capital.

He said peace with Israel was a strategic choice but added that it is not a "peace at any price."

The failure of promised peace dividends to materialise has soured more than opposition circles towards Jordan's 1994 treaty with Israel, and the intransigence of Israel's Likud-led government to make good on the Oslo and Wye River accords has only fuelled resentment.

"It is a peace that is based on rights, justice and international legitimacy, and is durable and receives public support," Rawabdeh said.

Serbs defiant after NATO strike on Belgrade, bridge

(Continued from page 1)

But Belgrade residents saw it as an assault by the United States on the city's population.

"Nothing is sacred for them. I do not dare to think what would happen if the missiles fell just a few metres away," Stojan, a pensioner, said, indicating a maternity hospital a few metres from the destroyed ministries.

"It seems that the Americans started WWII last night, but they should take note on how Hitler ended," he said, referring to the last time Belgrade was bombed, by Nazi Germany in 1941.

A young man said he feared that "this was just a beginning. But what can you expect from the country which used atomic bombs on civilians?"

Low, heavy cloud cover has so far severely restricted NATO warplanes from attacking Serbian troops and tanks deployed in Kosovo, but the alliance said the weather should clear in the next few days, allowing an "intensified" air campaign.

"There will be an intensification until Milosevic fully complies with NATO's terms," British Prime Minister Tony Blair said on British television.

In Brussels, Secretary General Javier Solana toughened NATO demands for Kosovo on Saturday, telling Milosevic to pull all forces out and accept a NATO-led force to escort ethnic Albanians home.

The shift, while not yet formally endorsed by the alliance, was a nail in the coffin of the Rambouillet settlement, which would allow Milosevic to keep a reduced security presence of 3,500 police and troops in an autonomous Kosovo.

The package negotiated at Rambouillet in France was agreed by the Kosovo Albanians but not by Milosevic.

Major NATO allies are concerned that he may soon offer to accept it, after having radically altered the ethnic makeup of Kosovo through a massive ethnic cleansing program.

"The chance of an acceptable solution relying on Rambouillet is increasingly remote," a high-ranking Western military official said. "These people have to go home. This deportation cannot stand."

Solana demanded that Yugoslavia "stop all repressive and combat activity and withdraw its forces from Kosovo."

It must "accept arrangements in which all refugees can return safely to Kosovo under the protection of an international security force," he said in a statement.

Solana's demand indicated that NATO now intended to impose a Kosovo security force on Yugoslavia rather than allow Milosevic to agree to the Rambouillet peace settlement and its provision for an international peacekeeping mission.

"We will defeat you," Blair told Milosevic, predicting that the Yugoslav president would offer to talk peace in "two or three days."

At the Albanian frontier post of Pashtrik, a refugee, Ardan Duraku, described the tactics used by Serb soldiers and police to clear Kosovo of its population.

"They kill all those who don't run away in a few seconds... I've seen seven children killed. And the Serbian civilians, neighbours who promised to protect us the day before, they help them set fire to the houses," he said.

The BBC showed what it said were the first pictures of massacres by Serbs of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo on Saturday.

The BBC said a reporter on the Macedonian border with Kosovo had obtained the video film from a Kosovo Albanian who had filmed his home town of Krusa in the south of the province after Serb units had left.

The film, which the BBC

said was too gruesome to broadcast in all but far-off glimpses until later in the evening, purportedly showed a number of bodies of men lying in pools of blood in the streets and in fields.

The filmmaker, who was identified as Miladin Bellanica, said he had returned to his town after the Serbs had passed through. He made the film and then smuggled it to Macedonia.

He said the bodies he found were those of men who had been executed with a single bullet to the back of the head.

Meanwhile, the new ethnic Albanian "government" of Kosovo on Saturday ordered a general mobilisation of all Kosovo Albanians of fighting age who have arrived in Albania since last Saturday.

The order came in a communique quoted by Albanian television.

"All men aged from 18 to 50 have the obligation to join the Kosovo Liberation Army to fight against the Milosevic regime which is killing us and chasing us from our lands," it said.

It was the first official order given by the new "government" headed by the KLA's political chief Hashim Thaqi, whose formation was announced late Friday.

"One of the aims of this gov-

ernment is to organise armed resistance in the face of Serb violence," a Tirana-based KLA official, who wished to remain anonymous, said.

The KLA had already started recruiting men fleeing Kosovo at Albanian border posts, AFP was able to confirm Saturday.

Belgrade says the "unprecedented" vandalism of NATO forces "is the main reason for the mass civilian exodus."

Britain has put forward the idea of a "sanctuary" in Macedonia which Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said would be "created, protected and supplied by NATO troops."

In Albania, overwhelmed by 170,000 Kosovo refugees, plans are also being made for a huge helicopter airlift to move those who crossed the border in remote mountain areas and to more accessible places.

NATO's military spokesman, British Air Commodore David Wilby, said there was also "growing evidence" in Montenegro, Serbia's much smaller sister state in Yugoslavia, that Milosevic is planning a coup (see story on page 12).

The Russian reconnaissance ship Liman sailed through Turkey's Bosphorus Strait on its way from the black sea to the Mediterranean to underline Moscow's solidarity with Belgrade.

what's going on

FILMS

Swedish film "The Seventh Seal" at Darat Al Funn, Jabal Weibdeh, on Tuesday April 6 at 6:30 p.m.

"I know What You Did Last Summer" at Books@Cafe, Jabal Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).

EXHIBITIONS

"Photos from Berlin" by Basam Lahoud at the University of Jordan, Faculty of Humanities, until April 5.

Display of Iraq Al Amir collection at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation until April 29 (Tel. 5699141/2).

(The exhibition includes handicraft, pottery, handwoven fabrics, cushions, handmade paper, and food).

"Amman... A Meeting Point" by Swedish artists Ann Edholm and Hakan Rhenberg at Darat Al Funn, Jabal Weibdeh. Also displaying works

by contemporary Arab artists, until April 22.

Works on paper by Russian artist Yuri Pestov entitled "Al Farouse, the Rose Garden" at the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 12 (Tel. 4623297).

Analysts see renewed opportunity for Jordan to strengthen ties with Syria

(Continued from page 1)

"We will build on ties that have existed with Syria for years. But we will not start from scratch, and there should be no prerequisites... We are not talking to the Syrians [if we have to] stop talking to Israel or to Turkey."

Syrian-Jordanian ties began to deteriorate in June 1994 when Jordan and Israel signed a declaration of intent in anticipation of a peace treaty clinched four months later. For Syria, the treaty was a blow to Assad's efforts to keep a united Arab front in peace negotiations that left it, and its ally Lebanon, isolated and more vulnerable than at any time in decades of conflict with the Jewish state.

But differences separating King Hussein and Assad long predated the treaty. Jordan was firmly pro-Western while formally at war with Israel, while Assad had the backing of the Soviet Union.

Diplomats believe Assad, keen to test the waters for a possible change of policy under King Abdullah, would like to draw Jordan away from the Jewish state.

But he knows that Syria has little to offer that could entice King Abdullah to abandon the policies of the late King Hussein, who shifted

alliances throughout his 47-year reign to maintain Jordan's strategic position as a buffer state between Israel and its traditional foes Syria and Iraq.

The month-old government of Prime Minister Abdul-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh has made it clear that any improvement in Jordan's ties with Arab and Gulf states will not come at the expense of cooler ties with Israel.

"If Jordan can seize the opportunity provided by these recent Syrian gestures, it could help neutralise the front with Syria instead of having to grapple with uneasy ties with both Syria and Iraq," said a Lower House deputy. "Furthermore, any improvement with any Arab countries will always be a popular step at home."

King Abdullah's letter of designation to Rawabdeh's government reiterated Jordan's iron-clad commitment to the treaty with Israel, even though the Arab-Israeli peace process has been more or less deadlocked since Benjamin Netanyahu became premier of Israel in May 1996.

However, it is widely believed in Amman's elite circle of politicians that the new monarch is slow to the pace of normalisation with Israel, at least initially and in the run-up to the Israeli election on May 17, in order

to win more credit at home and in the region.

While Damascus realises that Jordan's peace treaty with Israel cannot be undone, Jordanian neutrality between Israel and the Arabs would represent an improvement on Amman's perceived tilt towards Israel, diplomats said.

Damascus is also eyeing prospects of resumed peace talks after the Israeli ballot.

"You need to look at the recent Syrian behaviour towards Jordan in a comprehensive manner," said a senior official. "If you want to improve your relations or to re-engage in negotiations for peace with Israel, you cannot just go against those who have already done the same thing that you would like to do," he added.

"The Syrians know that sooner or later they will have to go back to the negotiating table and that Jordan could act as a go-between, if Labour wins the May elections."

Peace talks between Israel and Syria started at the Madrid peace conference in 1991, but have been frozen since February 1996. Syria insists the talks can only resume if Netanyahu respects verbal undertakings given by his Labour predecessors to withdraw from the Golan Heights Israel occupied in 1967 in

exchange for peace.

But Netanyahu insists he is not bound by past verbal promises and that talks must start "unconditionally."

However, Jordan's growing military and political ties with Turkey remain a major thorn in Jordanian-Syrian ties.

Amman's participation as an observer in Israeli-Turkish naval manoeuvres two years ago outraged Damascus, which had already denounced a 1996 military cooperation deal signed between Israel and Turkey.

Jordan has denied Syrian accusations that it formed a pact with the two countries to threaten other Arab states.

"Jordan has a strategic interest in maintaining good links with Turkey, which apart from many socio-economic and political factors, remains the only counterweight to Iranian influence in the region after the collapse of Iraqi power following the 1990-91 Gulf crisis," said an official.

Jordan angered Syria by backing Iraq against Iran during the 1980-1988 Gulf War.

Despite a two-year-old Jordanian-Iranian rapprochement, Amman continues to keep tabs on Damascus' strategic links with Tehran even after the June 1996 election of moderate

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

Though Jordan has distanced itself from Iraq over the years, especially after the Gulf crisis sparked by Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, Syria's major external concern at present is its eastern flank, diplomats said.

Syria believes the aim of the U.S. is to replace the Iraqi regime with a pro-Western government and to bring Iraq into the U.S.-Israeli-Turkish camp.

From Damascus' geopolitical stand, the overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the emergence of a pro-Western regime would complete the encirclement of Syria as well as threaten its ally, Iran.

Jordan has been calling for change in Iraq since granting refuge to top Iraqi defectors in 1995, sparking unease in Syria over a possible Jordanian role in Iraq.

Iran's strained ties with Syria have eased over the past two years, but both states are run by rival Ba'ath parties.

"Neither Iraq nor Syria want to see any role for Jordan in Iraq," said a diplomat. "So, this will continue to be another challenge."

Meanwhile, both Syria and Jordan, undergoing serious economic and political changes at home,

appear ready to set aside past tensions and to open a new chapter.

The ascension of King Abdullah to the Throne and the absence of any peace negotiators in Rawabdeh's Cabinet has been welcomed in Syria.

King Abdullah took over as Assad began his fifth seven-year term in office preparing to launch new economic and political policies to ensure a smooth succession.

"There is growing belief that Syria is about to launch a comprehensive re-evaluation of its stand on several regional files, starting with its Arab neighbours and ending with the peace process," wrote columnist Oreib Rantawi in the Arabic daily Al-Dustour on Saturday.

"Syria has felt a deep weakness caused by Iraq and has realised the impact of worsening ties with its southern neighbours Jordan and Palestine. Hence, it had decided to mend and deepen ties after realising the difficulty in making up for this imbalance by solely relying on Iran."

Officials said King Abdullah was planning to visit Syria in the next few weeks as part of an Arab tour to explain his views and to capitalise on unprecedented regional pledges of support since the death of King Hussein.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq

Shara'a plans to visit Amman by next month to prepare for a meeting of the Higher Jordanian-Syrian Committee, the first since 1989.

The committee, co-chaired by the Syrian and Jordanian prime ministers, is set to meet in Damascus to chart an overall strategy for broad-based cooperation. But no dates for Shara'a's trip or for the meeting have been set.

Officials believe there is ample room for improving Jordan's modest trade links with Syria and for getting a firm commitment to honour Jordan's full water share from the Yarmouk River as the water-parched Kingdom braces for a hot summer.

A few joint investment projects born out of rare political closeness in the late 1980s are barely operating.

Officials also hope that further fence-mending with Syria will result in Damascus sending an ambassador to run the mission in Jordan, a post vacant since November 1993, in easing travel procedures on Jordanians and in ending a nine-year-old jamming of Jordan Television.

"There is great room for improving ties, especially on the economic front," said one official. "But we have to work on sustaining normal daily ties and on separating them from any of our political differences."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Focus
19:30 News Headlines
19:33 Fant Pas Rever
20:30 Walker Texas Ranger
21:15 Divine Pledge
22:00 News in English
22:10 Mini-series - Blind Face (pt1)

PRAYER TIMES

03:58 Fajr
05:17 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:39 Dhuhr
15:12 'Asr
18:01 Maghreb
19:19 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

<p>19:00 Le Journal 19:15 French Focus 19:30 News Headlines 19:33 Fant Pas Rever 20:30 Walker Texas Ranger 21:15 Divine Pledge 22:00 News in English 22:10 Mini-series - Blind Face (pt1)</p> <p>PRAYER TIMES</p> <p>03:58 Fajr 05:17 (Sunrise) Dhuha 11:39 Dhuhr 15:12 'Asr 18:01 Maghreb 19:19 'Isha</p> <p>CHURCHES</p> <p>St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweith, Tel. 5920740 Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785 St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590 Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366 Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811. St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751. Amman International Church Tel. 5865897 German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404 The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295 Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-</p>	<p>ter Day Saints Tel. 4654932 St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757 Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440 Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138 Church of Presentation, Sweith Tel. 5920146 The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757 The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190 Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679 The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052 The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331 The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261</p> <p>WEATHER</p> <p>Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology</p> <p>Temperatures are expected to rise gradually today and tomorrow. It will be moderate to warm with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds easterly to southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be moderate, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.</p> <p>Min/Max temp. Amman 08/20 Aqaba 14/28</p>	<p>Deserts 05/22 Jordan Valley 13/28</p> <p>Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 18 Aqaba 26. Humidity readings: Amman 34 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.</p> <p>Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:</p> <p>Ajlun 05/15 Jerash 08/19 Um Qays 09/21 Madaba 08/20 Petra 06/22 Dead Sea 14/28</p> <p>USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY</p> <p>AMMAN: Dr. Khalil Tushuk 4757253 Dr. Bahjat Bader 532642 Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 535432 Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi 4893542</p> <p>AMMAN: Firas Pharmacy 5661912 Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730 Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004 Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169</p> <p>IRBID: Dr. Issam Salih (02)246858 Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360</p> <p>ZARQA: Dr. Walid Nabhan (05)3851743</p>	<p>Palestine Pharmacy (05)983562</p> <p>EMERGENCIES</p> <p>Food Control Centre 4637111 Civil Defence Department 4773111 Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341 Civil Defence Emergency 199 Rescue Police 192, 462111, 463777 Fire Brigade 4617101 Blood Bank 4775121 Highway Police 5343402 Traffic Police 4896390 Public Security Dept. 4630321 Hotel Complaints 5605800 Price Complaints 5661176 Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467 Amman Municipality Complaints 787111 Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121 Overseas Calls 0132 Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101 Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101 Jordan Television 4773111 Radio Jordan 4774111 Water Authority 5680100 J. Electricity Authority 5815615 Electric Power Co. 4636381 RJ Flight Information 44-53200 Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200</p>	<p>The Islamic, Abdli 56661317 Husseini Medical Centre 5858836 Luzmila 4630195 Khalidi Maternity 46422816 Akileh Maternity 46424412 Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362 Malhas, J. Amman 4636140 Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071 Shmeisani Hospital 5607431 Jordan Hospital 5607550 University Hospital 5353444 Al-Muasher Hospital 5667279 Al-Ahli, Abdali 56641646 Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4771013 Al-Bashir 47751126 Army, Marka 4891611/5 Queen Alia Hospital 5157100 Amal Hospital 5607155 Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000 Jerusalem Hospital 4387181</p> <p>ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323 Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560 Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731 Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990</p> <p>IRBID: Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555 Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275 Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)7101372, (02)7103101 Rosary Sisters Hospital (02)7102831, (02)7102011 Speciality Hospital (02)7109100</p>	<p>AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital (03)2014111</p> <p>FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT</p> <p>This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5</p> <p>ARRIVALS</p> <p>Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights 06:15 Bangkok, Doha (RJ) 07:30 Damascus (RJ) 08:10 Beirut (RJ) 08:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 08:35 Jeddah (RJ) 09:05 Bombay (RJ) 09:05 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ) 10:10 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ) 14:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 16:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)</p> <p>17:05 Manchester, Athens (add) (RJ) 17:50 London (RJ) 18:15 Paris (RJ) 18:30 Brussels (add) (RJ) 19:35 Frankfurt (RJ) 20:15 Rome (RJ) 20:45 Madrid, Geneva (RJ) 23:00 Vienna, Aqaba (RJ) 23:55 Cairo (RJ) 02:20 Vienna (add) (RJ)</p> <p>Other Flights 14:35 Istanbul (TK) 18:00 Dubai, Damascus (EK) 18:40 Beirut (ME) 18:45 Kiev (6U) 19:05 Paris (AF) 20:25 Tel Aviv (LY) 23:30 Cairo (MS) 23:35 London, Beirut (BA) 23:55 Larnaca (CY) 00:55 Bucharest (RO) 02:00 Rome (AZ)</p> <p>Royal Wings (RW) Flights 07:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW) 10:30 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW) 16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW) 18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)</p> <p>DEPARTURES</p> <p>Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights 04:30 Beirut (RJ)</p> <p>05:30 Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ) 07:00 Brussels (add) (RJ) 09:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 09:00 Madrid (RJ) 09:40 Frankfurt (RJ) 10:35 Athens, Rome (RJ) 10:45 Aqaba, Vienna (RJ) 11:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 11:15 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ) 11:45 Amsterdam, New York (RJ) 16:00 London (RJ) 19:00 Vienna (add) (RJ) 20:05 Cairo (RJ) 20:20 New Delhi (RJ) 20:20 Jeddah (RJ) 21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ) 21:40 Bangkok (RJ) 22:30 Damascus (RJ) 22:45 Sanaa (RJ) 00:30 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ) 03:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)</p> <p>Other Flights 07:10 Frankfurt (LH) 15:35 Istanbul (TK) 19:00 Dubai (EK) 19:40 Kiev (6U) 20:00 Beirut (ME) 21:10 Tel Aviv (LY) 21:40 Cairo (MS) 00:35 Amsterdam (KL) 01:55 Bucharest (RO) 03:00 Rome (AZ) 07:15 Beirut, London (BA)</p> <p>Royal Wings (RW) Flights 08:15 Tel Aviv (arriving from QAIA) (RW) 08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW) 16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW) 20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)</p>
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Rawabdeh outlines tough agenda in policy statement...

AMMAN (J.T.) — Following are major excerpts of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh's government policy statement:

My government takes pride in being the first under the reign of His Majesty King Abdullah and hopes to shoulder its responsibility in a stage in which the nation is facing serious challenges.

I extend a hand to Parliament for close cooperation, consultation and exchange of advice, since Parliament represents the Jordanian people, their hopes and their aspirations. As I present my government's policy, I seek your support and help in executing the King's directives and helping achieve our aspirations for a brighter future.

This government holds no magic wand but determination and resolve to carry out its task in cooperation with Parliament and in true commitment to the provisions of the Jordanian constitution.

This government will not shirk its responsibilities or duties, and pledges to be open to all citizens. [We] believe in pluralism: the main foundation of democracy.

Therefore, this government will open dialogue with all political parties, professional associations and trade unions and will cooperate with all sectors.

This government believes enhancing national unity and ensuring justice to all is a duty, and will therefore guarantee the independence of the judicial authority by preventing any interference in its affairs. We will work in conjunction with the judiciary in preparing a draft law that will help develop the judiciary and separate the Ministry of Justice's budget from that of the judiciary's budget.

This government believes in democracy which protects the rights of all and ensures stronger national unity. The

government is determined to further consolidate the rules and principles of democracy...and will ensure public freedoms notable free expression within the law and welcomes constructive criticism.

The Jordan Armed Forces are the nation's shield, defending citizens and protecting national interests. The government will, therefore, ensure all possible support to the Armed Forces as well as the security services which guarantee security and stability for Jordanians.

Administrative reform

The public administration has been plagued with bureaucracy, incompetence, abuse of authority, a lack of control and poor performance.

Therefore, the government will carry out administrative reform, because none of its programmes can be implemented except through an efficient administration that assumes its duties and carries out its task. We will focus attention on restructuring the public administration system and we will select leaders based on their competence, efficiency and integrity.

The government will support the work of honest employees who carry out their duties with honour and honesty, behaving as servants to the public. We will remove from office any official who abuses his or her position regardless of rank or level.

Corruption

The government is determined to deal with corruption which has been rampant in all sectors. The government will deal seriously with all cases. [We] will strike the hands of the corrupt and bring them to justice, and [we will] reward the honest hard working. We intend to

open an ombudsman's office to hear public complaints and grievances and we intend to enhance the role of the Audit Bureau to protect public funds.

Legal reforms

We realise that many laws are obsolete and do not cater to modern developments and improved services. We, therefore, intend to introduce measures to simplify routine work, cut unnecessary expenses and save time for the public and the government.

This task requires a huge effort, but we are determined to overcome obstacles. We hope to maintain close consultation with Parliament in ensuring services and justice. We also intend to develop municipal and other local councils to enable them to act as partners in providing public services. This is to be done through efficient and competent administrative units which can give us sound planning and ensure implementation.

Economy

We believe that we are facing three main critical issues: economy, unemployment and poverty, and water. These are chronic issues which have grown over the years. But we intend to work with Parliament to find solutions which could entail tough decisions and harsh measures.

The government will place particular achievable objectives. I would like to point out that Jordan's economy has retreated and is facing a recession felt by every citizen. No theoretical views can justify such a situation. It is true that most countries of the region are facing a recession, but in our case, recession is hard on Jordanians given their limited income and meagre resources. Therefore, there

can be no alternative to immediate measures to stop this retreat and stimulate the economy.

Our brothers around the world at the time of the passing of His Majesty the late King Hussein stood by us. We want to build on that and hope to give momentum to the economy by securing aid, through joint investment projects and by exporting Jordan's products and labour force.

We intend to adopt the following strategy to deal with the economy, poverty and unemployment and to attract investments:

1. By attracting investment and creating job opportunities;
2. By improving the public administration's efficiency and competence;
3. By addressing poverty and upgrading human resources;
4. By opening trade and investment to the world.

At the same time the government will take measures to secure price stability and keep inflation at its lowest level.

As to indebtedness, the government has already made intensive contacts with creditor nations in the hopes of reducing Jordan's debt burden. The government is also developing the Amman Financial Market and restructuring its activities to guarantee shareholders' rights. The government will work to develop the Investment-Promotion Corporation and simplify procedures to encourage investors. It intends to present to Parliament a new draft banking law that eliminates all the loopholes in the existing law. The government believes foreign trade is the lung of industry, thus we intend to reduce customs duty, particularly on primary goods for local industries so that we can ensure more exports.

Tourism also plays a key

role in our economy, and the government will give due attention to this sector and will develop the natural, archaeological and religious tourist sites and will stimulate the process of marketing Jordan abroad.

The government will also prepare a national programme for the excavation of archaeological sites and will build a national museum for antiquities.

We will go ahead with the process of privatisation and restructure those government companies which continually face losses. We believe that privatisation, which means a greater role for the private sector, is bound to increase efficiency and improve the quality of products. The government intends to attract competent and efficient cadres to deal with this issue.

Unemployment

It also believes that unemployment is a chronic disease that causes frustration and suffering for many people. We intend to address this issue by helping local job-seekers to take the place of guest workers. We will focus our attention on these measures and will improve the working conditions of Jordanians to encourage them to engage in any service in different fields. In this respect, we intend to offer vocational training so that job-seekers become qualified for the labour market.

The government will also increase its cooperation with labour unions and will give due attention and support Jordanian workers abroad.

Water shortage

As to the water situation in the Kingdom, we will seek new water resources and take crucial measures to ensure good water quality for different uses. The government will revise its strat-

egy and attract competent cadres to do the job and hold a national conference on water to find long-term solutions for our future water needs. The government has worked out an emergency water plan to deal with the expected water shortage this summer. It will work to draw water from the Disi basin, and studies in this respect are nearly completed, paving the way for the implementation of this vital project.

Jordan has meagre energy resources, and our energy consumption is on the rise. The government will intensify prospecting for oil and natural gas in cooperation with local and foreign companies and will give due attention to utilising shale oil to produce crude oil for power generation.

Culture and education

With regard to education, Jordan has made major strides in providing school buildings, curricula and textbooks. But we intend to further improve these facilities and we will focus on teachers and help them acquire higher qualifications and carry out their tasks as best as possible.

As to culture, the government will give due attention to institutions which deal with cultural activities and we will halt the retreat in the role of arts. The government will give due attention to art and artists and open for the artists the doors to audiovisual media and conclude agreements with Arab and friendly countries to promote the arts.

The government plans to enable the work of media to assume its basic role in our democratic life. And we intend to employ very competent and creative cadres that can help reflect Jordan's image to the world.

Health care reform

With regard to health services, the government plans to revise health-care programmes and develop the work of the Higher Health Council which can draw up related policies. In this respect, the government will increase the number of beds in hospitals, build more hospitals and pursue efforts to secure comprehensive health insurance for all citizens. The government plans to expand mother and child care services and deal with contagious and other diseases.

Environmental protection

In order to protect our environment, the government intends to proceed with a national project of planting forests alongside roads and different areas to stem desertification and find solutions for disposing of harmful waste.

Communications and transport

With reference to telecommunications, the government seeks to boost the capacity of telephone services to reach one million telephone lines by the end of the year 2000 and will improve and modernise this vital service as well as the mobile service through the Jordan Telecommunications Corporation.

The government has plans to better organise the transport sector and attract investment in transport projects. It will also give due attention to railway services and will speed up the restructuring of Royal Jordanian and improve the services of Aqaba sea port.

Jordanian-Arab relations

The government believes in the common destiny of the Jordanian and Palestin-

ian people and takes pride in Jordan's role towards the Palestinian problem. The government will stand by the Palestinians and the Palestinian National Authority which strives to guarantee the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and establish an independent state on Palestinian national soil. We will work with the PNA in all fields and we are certain that the future will witness some kind of union between the two peoples following the creation of the independent state based on will and the decision of the people of both sides.

The government will carry out the King's directives in building strong relations with other Arab countries based on mutual respect and cooperation. The government seeks to consolidate Arab ranks and protect Arab interests and work to lift sanctions imposed on Iraq, Libya and Sudan and act and support our brothers in Syria and Lebanon to help them restore their lands.

Peace process

Peace is Jordan's strategic option as the late King Hussein declared. It is also the option of the other Arab countries and the world to secure the stability, security and development of all nations. What we seek is peace based on justice and rights and on international legitimacy. The peace process has been facing numerous obstacles, and the government, therefore, insists on securing the restoration of the rights of all Arab countries and will work closely with all peace-loving nations to put the peace process back on its right track. The government will strengthen Jordan's relations with all Arab and Islamic countries as well as regional and international organisations.

...and hints at severe water conservation measures

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — The government on Saturday said it is determined to review the country's water strategy through a national water conference, in which qualified experts will design a long-term solution to stave off the Kingdom's chronic water shortage and ensure future water security.

"The water situation is critical and requires immediate serious and decisive regulations to exploit our water resources properly, to find new resources, to meet increasing demand and to ensure water quality for all purposes," Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh told the Parliament while submitting his government's policy statement.

His Majesty King Abdullah has said immediate action must be taken to set up short- and long-term solutions to develop water resources and to ration consumption in order to alleviate the pressure of a

water shortage, the most pressing national issue.

Rawabdeh, who did not give further details on the conference, said the government has set up an emergency plan to deal with this summer's shortage in line with "accepted scenarios, which will be gradually implemented according to developments."

The government, which officially declared a state of drought in January, reported that Jordan's water deficit for the second half of this year is projected to reach approximately 10 per cent, with demand totalling 283 million cubic metres and supply amounting to 254 mcm.

According to the recent available statistics, water levels in the King Talal Dam has dropped from 72 mcm to 33.1 mcm, Wadi Arab Dam from 16 mcm to 9.8 mcm, Ziglab Dam from 3.5 mcm to 1.2 mcm, Sha'eb Dam from 1.34 mcm to 341,000 cubic metres, Kafra Dam from 8.5 mcm to 372,000 cubic metres and the

desert and Karameh dams are nearly empty.

The premier said new water wells will be drilled and linked to the main water network. Privately-owned wells will be also linked to the network and water used for agriculture will be reduced.

Officials said the Ministry of Interior, backed by security agencies, will be responsible for exerting control over private wells, whose owners allegedly are exploiting an estimated 320 mcm of water annually. Most of them pay a fraction of the cost of water they extract, a practice that have continued unabated for years, according to industry sources who claimed that of the 1,654 wells, 528 are unlicensed and therefore have no meters.

At present, around 650 mcm of water per year are used for agriculture, part of which is non-renewable. Another 300 mcm of water is used annually for domestic purposes, while industry consumes 50

mcm, according to water experts.

The programme will give priority to securing safe drinking water, to intensifying maintenance of leaky water distribution networks, to provide water tankers to citizens to meet demand, to ration consumption and to ensure Jordan's full water share from Israel under the 1994 peace treaty, according to Rawabdeh.

The government estimates, more than 50 per cent of water circulated to citizens has been lost each year due to both a worn-out water network and illegal water usage. It has been reported that these losses cost the treasury JD15 million a year.

The problem has been exacerbated by Israel's declaration that it will cut water supply to Jordan stipulated in the 1994 peace treaty by 40 per cent. The Kingdom has strongly rejected the proposal and insisted on obtaining its rightful water share stipulated in

the treaty's water annex.

The peace deal stipulates that Israel extracts 12 mcm of water from the Yarmouk River in summer, and Jordan uses the rest. In winter, Israel takes 33 mcm from the river, of which 20mcm are stored for Jordan in Lake Tiberias for the Kingdom's use in summer. According to the treaty, Jordan and Israel should cooperate to supply the Kingdom with an additional quantity of 50 mcm of drinkable water every year.

But Israel recently said it was not able this winter to collect the 20 mcm from the Yarmouk because of a regional drought.

The prime minister added that his government is "serious" about drawing the water to the central region from the 30,000-year-old Disi aquifer in the south of the country and it will complete studies soon before floating an investment tender.

Last year, former water and irrigation minister Hani Mulki

said the World Bank appeared willing to guarantee a \$730 million loan to be obtained from commercial banks to help finance the Disi-Amman water project.

Mulki signed an \$800,000 agreement with a local firm to dig two deep wells in Karak in order to examine the Disi's water quality, and in October, the government solicited around 51 local, Arab and foreign firms to pre-qualify for the project on a build, operate and transfer basis.

The Disi-Amman conveyance system will be transferred to the government after 20 years. It will entail drilling wells, the construction of a pumping station and a 325-kilometre water pipeline from the aquifer that will deliver 100 mcm a year to the capital by 2005.

Around 50 mcm from the Disi aquifer now supplies by four privately-owned farms with water free of charge under a 25-year concession agreement granted by the gov-

ernment in 1985. Another 14 mcm is extracted from the aquifer, which is also used by Saudi Arabia and Israel, for domestic purposes in Aqaba. Water experts say the aquifer is already over-exploited, with an annual drop of 80-85 centimetres in its level. They are also worried about pollution of the non-renewable aquifer and stress that agricultural use in the area must stop.

Rawabdeh said the construction of the long-delayed Jordanian-Syrian Wihdah Dam on the Yarmouk River will be another priority.

A joint committee agreed last year to move ahead with the construction of the JD152 million dam and seek funding for the project. The dam is expected to have a storage capacity of 225 mcm of water. Construction is expected to take three and half years.

He said the government will hustle in constructing planned dams and study possibilities to build new ones, which will include hi-tech water rationing

methods.

A JD180 million project was launched to construct dams in the Mujib, Waleh and Hasa Valleys, a diversion dam at the conjunction of Mujib and Waleh, and infrastructure for an irrigation system to water 12,000 dunams of land situated at the northern part of Ghor Safi.

The project will exploit floods flowing to the targeted valleys to provide 19 mcm of water per year to the Arab Potash Company and the Dead Sea Chemical Complex, 15 mcm per year to the tourist area on the eastern shores of the Dead Sea and 20 mcm per year to boost agricultural irrigation to 61 dunams in the northern Ghor.

By the year 2000, Jordan's population, growing at around 3.5 per cent per year, will require 1,257 million cubic metres of water to cover minimum needs; resources will be capable of supplying only 960 mcm.

Equality in our time?

PM seeks to erase sexual discrimination from books

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The government on Saturday pledged to remove all legislative discriminatory to women to enable them to play a more active role in society.

Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, outlining his government's policy in a statement to Parliament ahead of the vote of confidence, said he will present to the Lower House a series of draft amendments to all legislation containing discriminatory clauses.

"We are going to present the Lower House with draft legislation to eliminate all forms of injustice and discrimination against women," the prime minister said without giving any further details.

He added that it is no

longer possible to build a coherent society without the cooperation of all segments on the basis of justice and equality and the preservation of the rights of all.

"Women need full support to move development and to fully participate in life, and we are going to fight all forms of discrimination against women so that they will occupy the positions they deserve," the premier told parliamentarians.

The pledges made by the prime minister on Saturday followed a strongly-worded letter by His Majesty King Abdullah to the premier and his Cabinet in March 1999, instructing the executive to work hard to boost women's role. He said women are a basic pillar of the country's development.

The King also instructed Rawabdeh, a father of 11, to amend any laws that "discriminate against the rights of women and inflict injustice on them." King Abdullah did not specify these laws.

"The role of women has developed through their participation in the country's economic, social, political and administrative life and this role needs the utmost care especially in the badia and rural areas," the King told Rawabdeh upon appointing him as premier on March 4.

It was the first letter of designation that specifically called for the removal of discrimination against women from legislation, marking a new era for Jordanian women.

Women activists have for years called for

amendments to several discriminatory laws, such as Article 340 of the Jordanian Penal Code which exempts or reduces punishment for individuals convicted of murdering their female relatives in what are locally known as "honour crimes."

Other discriminatory laws include the social security, citizenship and retirement laws, under which men have the full rights to claim the social security benefits of their spouse, although the family of a working woman who dies cannot benefit from her social security.

In addition Jordanian women who marry foreign men cannot pass on Jordanian citizenship to their husbands or children.

MB says NATO intentions in Kosovo dubious

By Saad G. Hattar and agencies

AMMAN — The prominent Muslim Brotherhood on Saturday slammed the Serbian-perpetrated genocide against Muslim Albanians in Kosovo and cast doubt on the real intentions behind NATO strikes against Yugoslavia.

"We denounce the barbaric Serb aggression against Muslim citizens of Kosovo, and call on Arab and Islamic nations to work towards halting this massacre against humanity," said the Brotherhood in a strong-worded communiqué, on the tenth day of NATO's air blitz against Yugoslavia.

Jordan officially has condemned the Serb leadership for the mass killings and last week withdrew its charge d'affaires from Belgrade.

The most influential grouping on the Jordanian political scene also cast "doubt" on the "real intentions" behind the NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia.

"We eye with suspicion and doubt the way the NATO members, especially the U.S., are handling the Kosovo cause," said the communiqué. "It is a multi-faceted conflict and Muslims are its sole victim in [the Balkans]."

The Brotherhood charged that "the NATO members treat Arab and Islamic

causes within the framework of NATO's own interest without any consideration for those states."

It did not rule out that NATO, in handling the Balkan points of tension like Kosovo, "served the targets of the Serb political system which may be similar to those of the NATO."

The Brotherhood warned "Arab leaders and peoples" against what it called an "international conspiracy" aimed at driving Muslims out of Europe.

In retaliation for NATO air strikes, the Serbs reportedly bent on an "ethnic cleansing" coupled with mass killings and expulsions of Muslim communities.

Around 290,000 Kosovars have fled their homes, causing a

"demographic earthquake" in the Balkans, a NATO spokesman said in Brussels. Macedonia pleaded with Europe on Saturday to help them cope with a tide of human misery flooding in from the troubled province of Kosovo, causing what NATO called a "demographic earthquake."

The exodus counted its first dead among thousands mustered at border crossing points. Seven old people and a new-born baby died of exhaustion near Blace on the border with Macedonia on Thursday night, a Red Cross

spokesman said. Albania, Europe's poorest country, has borne the brunt of the exodus, taking in 130,000 Kosovars so far, according to the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR.

If Serb forces keep forcing ethnic Albanians out of Kosovo at the current rate, the province "will be emptied within 10 to 20 days," spokesman Jamie Shea said.

NATO has also ordered military plans be drawn up for a NATO force for Albania to help ensure humanitarian aid deliveries to the refugees.

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said Germany offered asylum to deported Kosovars and appealed to fellow members of the 15-nation European Union to do likewise.

After fleeing in terror from a Serb offensive, desperate refugees, including babies, children, pregnant women, the old and the sick, were forced to spend the night in rain without shelter.

NATO ambassadors decided Saturday to send "several thousand" armed soldiers to Albania to help ensure humanitarian aid, a diplomat said.

Refugees have also flooded Montenegro, the republic which makes up Yugoslavia along with Serbia. Aid shipments from European capitals have begun arriving in the region.

Macedonia 'cannot accept more refugees'

BLACE, Macedonia (AP) — Macedonia announced Saturday it could no longer accept more Kosovo refugees and called on its neighbours and the European Union to help shelter a massive wave of ethnic Albanians.

Saying its fragile democracy and economy were at stake, the Macedonian Security Council said that its army would act to prevent the illegal entry of any more refugees.

"It was assessed that the security situation in the country could be seriously endangered because of the huge wave of refugees from Kosovo, which are more than 50,000," the council said after an all-night meeting.

But it stopped short of saying Macedonia would seal its borders with neighbouring Yugoslavia to all travellers or turn back any asylum seekers.

With another 50,000 refugees waiting to enter, the statement said "this council concluded that the Republic of Macedonia cannot objectively accept such a huge number of refugees."

Macedonia, a former Yugoslav republic, has large Serb and ethnic Albanian communities and fears the tensions which exploded into open conflict in Kosovo could sweep this country.

The council — made up

of President Kiro Gligorov, Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski, and senior cabinet members — decided to accept only those refugees for which the international community had organised entrance into another country.

The council also appealed for the international community to provide urgent humanitarian assistance for the refugees already in Macedonia "with the aim of preventing the humanitarian catastrophe."

The announcement came as the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said the number of refugees packed in a small field in this river valley in the north's land straddling the border with Yugoslavia reached 65,000 Saturday.

As dawn broke, dozens of heavily armed police officers arrived at this border crossing, where refugees are packed into an area about the size of three football fields. Most came from the Kosovo provincial capital of Pristina on at least 12 trains over the past two days.

UNHCR spokeswoman Paula Ghedini denied reports that international aid agencies were not supplying enough food and blankets to keep people warm, but did say local authorities had been overwhelmed by the sheer number of arrivals.

"It is bigger than we had

prepared for. Macedonians had been prepared for 2,000 or 3,000" per day, she said.

She said UNHCR, working with the Macedonia Red Cross, had supplied the camp with 40 metric tonnes of food Friday and another 20 tonnes Saturday. Over 20,000 loaves of fresh bread were handed out, as well as 47,000 blankets, she said.

Tens of thousands of people milled around or squatted in the rain early Saturday as temperature hovered about 10 degrees above freezing. More than a dozen sick babies were taken out of the camp, while a couple of Red Cross tents were packed with more than two dozen sick people.

Ghedini said local officials were moving to speed up a registration process that would allow the refugees to be relocated in just constructed accommodation camps or with local relatives.

But refugees inside the camp complained of little food and expressed concern about the lack of sanitary facilities.

"There is not enough being done here, these people need much more help than they are getting," complained Abdyl Gani Cako, of the local ethnic Albanian charity El Hilal.

Kosovo refugees have also been pouring into Albania, where they now number about 120,000.



The European Ariane 4 rocket lifts off from its launching pad to put the 2.6 tonne INSAT-2A Indian telecommunications and weather satellite into geostationary orbit. April 3 (Reuters photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Primakov meets with Azerbaijan president

MOSCOW (AP) — Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov discussed improving economic ties among ex-Soviet republics during a meeting with Azerbaijan President Geidar Aliev on Saturday. Aliev, in Moscow for a meeting of the leaders of the 12 nations which make up the Commonwealth of Independent States, told Primakov he wants stronger ties with Russia and the CIS, the ITAR-TASS news agency said. The pair also discussed the situation in Kosovo and Russia's demand for an end to NATO airstrikes. Azerbaijan, seeking closer ties to NATO, has proposed contributing troops if the alliance deploys a peacekeeping force in Kosovo.

Charges to be dropped against protesters

NEW YORK (AP) — Prosecutors plan to drop charges against the 1,200 people arrested at protests sparked by the police shooting of an unarmed west African immigrant, Amadou Diallo, a street vendor from Guinea, was killed Feb. 4 outside his Bronx apartment when four police officers fired 41 shots and struck him 19 times. The shooting led to daily demonstrations outside police headquarters in Manhattan where a number of prominent activists were arrested, including NAACP president Kweisi Mfume, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and actors Ossie Davis and Susan Sarandon. "It was a model demonstration, both on the part of the protesters and the police," district attorney Robert Morgenthau said on Friday. "I just think it's the right thing to do." But police Commissioner Howard Safir disagreed with the decision. "It is my opinion that these summonses should have been prosecuted through the system with a judge making the final determination," he said. The four officers involved in the shooting were indicted Wednesday on charges of second-degree murder.

Dutch find legionnaires' bacteria at health spa

AMSTERDAM (R) — Dutch health authorities, still reeling from the world's worst outbreak of legionnaires' disease, said they had found bacteria causing the potentially fatal illness at a thermal spa in a southern resort. "Checks by the health inspection service have located the legionella bacterium in the hydrojet bath at Thermie 2000 in Valkenburg, Limburg," the health ministry said in a statement late on Friday. It said the hydrojet bath, which can be used only by appointment, had since been closed. No outbreaks of the illness have yet been reported and samples from Thermie 2000's other baths showed no traces of the bacteria, it said. The health spa is already contacting people who used the bath during the last two weeks of March and its reservations list should make it possible to trace them all, the ministry said. An outbreak of legionnaires' disease among visitors to a bulb fair in the northern Dutch town of Bovenkarspel in late February has so far infected more than 230 people and killed 21 of them, making it the world's largest outbreak to date. Legionnaires' disease was first diagnosed in the United States in 1976, when about 180 people fell ill and 20 died at a convention of American legion veterans in Philadelphia. The Dutch health ministry said that since the Bovenkarspel outbreak it had been conducting intensive checks of high-risk locations, such as those using bubble-baths. The bacteria thrive in water and the Bovenkarspel outbreak has been traced to a whirlpool bath at the fair.

Governor and former Miss Universe in secret wedding

CARACAS (AFP) — Former Miss Universe turned politician Irene Saez has married in secret, her press spokesman said. The 37-year-old platinum blonde, the governor of Nueva Esparta, tied the knot with lawyer Humberto Briceno in a civil ceremony, the spokesman said Friday. "I knew it was going to happen but Irene didn't tell us the date because she wanted it to be a private ceremony with just the two of them," Saez's brother Pablo Saez told AFP. The former Miss Universe had become one of Venezuela's most recognisable politicians since winning her beauty pageant title in 1981. After serving two terms as mayor of Chacao, a rich suburb of Caracas, she made an unsuccessful bid to become president — losing in December 1998 to the incumbent Hugo Chavez. In March, Saez was elected governor of Nueva Esparta, a state some 340 kilometres northeast of Caracas that includes Margarita Island.

Dog sniffs for corpses at alleged sex-torture scene

ELEPHANT BUTTE, New Mexico (AP) — A massive state-federal investigation of a case with claims of kidnapping and sexual torture is closer to answers about whether homicide is involved, an FBI agent says. A dog trained to sniff out human remains roamed Thursday around a trailer where two women claimed they were chained and sexually tortured. "We have not as yet located any bodies," FBI agent Doug Beldon said. But he added: "We are closer to knowing whether we have a homicide and how many." The investigation began last month when a woman fled the mobile home naked except for a padlocked metal collar and chain. A second woman later came forward and said she had been tortured at the home in February. David Parker Ray, 59, and Cynthia Lea Hendy, 39, face 25 charges, including kidnapping, aggravated battery, and conspiracy. A preliminary hearing was scheduled for April 15. The defendants have said they are innocent. Scores of agents are investigating the case, which the FBI said has ties to Arizona, Texas and Mexico.

Cholera kills 27 in northern Tanzania

DAR ES SALAAM (AFP) — Twenty-seven people have died of cholera and more than 600 have been treated for the disease since it was first reported in northern Tanzania two months ago, health officials said Saturday. Arusha regional health officer Chrispine Shayo said that 223 people were hospitalised in various health centres in the region. "We have banned local brews and unhygienic bars and restaurants in a move to check the spread of the killer disease," said Shayo. "I am appealing to the people to boil food and drinking water, use latrines and report to health centres promptly cases of diarrhoea," he added.

London and Dublin seek to reconcile the unreconcilable

BELFAST (AFP) — Irish republican leader Gerry Adams faces the difficult task this weekend of gaining IRA support for Northern Ireland's peace plan.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) faces a dilemma of its own: if it wants to see politicians from Sinn Fein — the IRA's political wing — in the new Northern Ireland government it will have to make concrete moves towards disarmament.

A new British-Irish initia-

tive on Northern Ireland will be the subject of renewed talks among the province's various bodies on April 13 after initial negotiations ended without agreement this week.

Disarmament of the paramilitary groups is the main sticking point to an agreement to end 30 years of blood-letting in Northern Ireland between the nationalist Catholic and the pro-British loyalist Protestant communities.

This is not a new problem.

Deadlines have passed, ultimatums have been ignored and the peace accord, signed a year ago, is still not up and running.

To make matters worse, the traditional Protestant marching season, a frequent flashpoint for sectarian violence, begins on April 5.

The formula which British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern came up with seeks a balance between two apparently irreconcilable positions.

Protestant unionist leader David Trimble refuses to sit in government with Sinn Fein without IRA disarmament. The Republicans for their part want no preconditions to taking up the two seats on the new executive which they were promised in the peace agreement.

Blair and Ahern propose to name, at an unspecified date, members of a cabinet. Within a month from the appointment of the cabinet, a "collective act of reconciliation" would take place, in

which the IRA and other militias would be required to hand over arms on a "voluntary" basis.

A reduction in Britain's military presence in the province is also promised.

Adams is playing his cards close to his chest. Moderate Catholic leader John Hume was more forthcoming, saying "all the parties should be able to accept the proposed formula".

Fellow Nobel prize winner Trimble pronounced himself satisfied with the

scheme but faces criticism from within the Protestant camp wanting a firmer line on IRA disarmament.

Some MPs have attacked the Blair-Ahern initiative as confused and even incomprehensible.

However Progressive Unionist Party member David Ervine is impressed by the plan.

"I think the IRA have had an Exocet delivered by two governments, something we've been longing for. It has made a breakthrough."

Kenya's new vice president could be Moi's successor

NAIROBI (AFP) — The return of George Saitoti as Kenya's vice president left many wondering whether his reappointment meant that President Daniel Arap Moi had finally settled on a possible successor.

The septuagenarian Moi, serving his last five-year term, reappointed Saitoti as his deputy on Friday after leaving the post vacant since forming his current government early last year following general elections in December 1997.

"One thing any thinking Kenyan who gave the matter any thought pondered... was whether this man (Saitoti) will be Kenya's Third Man (third president after Jomo Kenyatta and Moi)," wrote the East African Standard in an editorial.

A vice president is widely seen here as the president's heir apparent, and political observers believe that Moi's apparent indecision before choosing his deputy was occasioned by fear of jealousy-inspired wrangles in his own party.

The heir-apparent mentality took root during the single-party era preceding the introduction of multi-party politics in 1991.

Saitoti, if he remains vice president until the

end of Moi's tenure, will have to win multi-party elections in 2002 to become president.

Observers here said Saitoti's advantage is that his political mentor is Nicholas Biwott, an influential cabinet minister who is said to be Moi's confidant.

The vacant vice presidency had whetted the appetites of several other key figures in Moi's Kenya African National Union party, prompting almost daily offers of candidates from the country's different ethnic groups.

Opposition politicians, the church and the general public have been urging Moi to name his deputy, saying his government was incomplete without a vice president whose post is provided for in the constitution.

Radical opposition member of parliament James Orengo had said last week that he would make a motion to censure Moi in parliament for failing to comply with the constitution by failing to appoint a vice president.

Orengo has said he will proceed with his plans to move the motion despite Saitoti's appointment because the president showed indecision in conducting state affairs.

"It took more than one year and a lot of pressure for Moi to realise that he cannot run away from his mandatory constitutional obligations," Orengo told the Daily Nation newspaper.

Saitoti, a former professor of mathematics at the University of Nairobi and currently planning minister, was vice president from 1988 to 1997, doubling for the first six years as finance minister, a post he had held since 1983.

His term in the treasury was blighted by one of the biggest financial scandals in Kenyan history, the siphoning off from state coffers by a businessman of \$200 million worth of export bonuses for fictitious sales of gold and diamonds.

The so-called Goldenberg affair, named after the company that allegedly carried out the transactions, which also implicated the central bank, has become a symbol of high-level corruption in Kenya.

The International Monetary Fund called for the affair to be settled before reopening talks on the resumption of aid to Kenya, suspended since July 1997.

Captured Khmer leader rejects state-appointed lawyer

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Captured Khmer Rouge leader Ta Mok has rejected a defence lawyer appointed by a Cambodian military court, legal sources said Saturday.

The sources said Chiv Songhak, a lawyer in his thirties who agreed on Friday to take on the controversial client, had been refused on the grounds he was too young and inexperienced.

"Although Ta Mok deferred the selection of a lawyer to the court, he has rejected the selection on the grounds the lawyer was too young and could therefore not be competent enough," a top legal source explained.

Since the arrest of Ta Mok nearly one month ago close to the frontier with Thailand, military prosecutors have been searching hard for a lawyer but have met with a string of rejections.

The initial refusals from several law firms raised criticism from human rights groups that Cambodia was an unsuitable venue for a trial for the former rebel, dubbed "The Butcher" and considered a key architect of the 1975-1979 Pol Pot regime.

Cambodia has rejected calls by the groups and the United Nations for an international tribunal.

Legal sources said Ta

Mok's rejection of Chiv Songhak, who lost several family members during the genocidal regime, put the search for a lawyer back to square one unless he himself stated a preference.

The 72-year-old one-legged Ta Mok has been charged under a 1994 law outlawing the Khmer Rouge, but faces a string of other charges including those related to his role in the Pol Pot regime that claimed up to two million lives.

Under Cambodian law the prosecutors must bring the case to court within six months. Ta Mok faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Soldier wounded in troubled South African township

DURBAN, South Africa (AFP) — A South African soldier was wounded in a shoot-out with civilians in a troubled township near Richmond in KwaZulu-Natal province, the defence force said Saturday.

The shoot-out occurred late Friday in the Magoda stronghold of slain United Democratic Movement (UDM) secretary Sifiso Nkabinde, when an army foot patrol was confronted by four men.

Defence force spokesman Lieutenant Arne Maitland said the men opened fire before taking refuge behind locked security gates at Nkabinde's house nearby.

No arrests were made, he said.

A police spokesman said police were investigating why Nkabinde's house was not searched after the shooting, and why no arrests were made.

UDM provincial secretary Jabulani Zondi told the South African Press Association that, according to witnesses, the army patrol opened fire first.

Army patrols have been operating in the township since an outbreak of political violence last year.

They were stepped up in the aftermath of Nkabinde's assassination last December, which threat-

ened to reignite a political war in the province. He was widely suspected of running a private army to build up support for the fledgling UDM.

Eleven supporters of the rival African National Congress (ANC) were subsequently massacred in an apparent reprisal attack.

The IFP and ANC share control of the province after a bloody power struggle that lasted almost a decade and claimed more than 12,000 lives. The IFP is powerful in the rural areas and the ANC in urban zones.

The area was reported to be calm Saturday.

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World News

Fresh outbreak of violence in Indonesia kills 3

AMBON, Indonesia (AFP) — Fresh Muslim-Christian violence has erupted in the Indonesian province of Maluku, leaving three dead and dozens injured after trouble spread to two more islands, an official said Saturday.

But an uneasy two-day calm continued in the city of Tual after clashes there earlier in the week in which at least 15 people were killed.

The three latest victims died Friday when Christians from two villages on Southeast Maluku's island of Larat attacked a mainly Muslim village also called Larat, Southeast Maluku district head Husein Rahayaan said by telephone from Tual.

Rahayaan said the attack in Larat, 190 kilometres southwest of Tual, also left dozens injured and about 100 houses burned.

He said sectarian violence also hit the town of Elat on Kei Besar island 30 kilometres east of Tual, leaving several people injured and one house burned.

The violence in the Southeast Maluku district over the past week has now claimed 18 lives with 40 injured and 256 houses torched. The state news agency Antara had put the number of injured in Tual alone at 50.

The clashes in Elat and Larat were the latest bouts of violence to erupt in the Maluku islands, where more than 200 people have been killed in Muslim-Christian clashes since mid-January, amid widespread devastation.

Elat's police chief, Second Lieutenant Kustarto, told Antara that people from the nearby village of Wartahait Yamtel had attacked Elat town but that order had been quickly restored.

Southeast Maluku deputy police chief Captain Dwi Rumalean said the latest violence in Elat and Larat might have been sparked by reports reaching the towns about the violence between Muslims and Christians in Tual.

Tual, a town of 65,000

people 540 kilometres southeast of the provincial capital Ambon, was rocked by two days of religious conflict that erupted in the early hours of Wednesday.

Rahayaan put the death toll in Tual at 15 with one body found on Saturday and three others the previous day.

The violence in Tual has prompted about 13,000 people to seek refuge in nine holding centres, mostly military installations, he said.

Although a tense calm had returned to Tual, Rumalean told AFP earlier Saturday that most of the refugees, including some 2,000 holed up at his headquarters, were reluctant to return home.

"Most of them want to be really sure that there is no more violence before they return to their homes," he said.

Rahayaan said local authorities were beginning to experience problems in supplies of food as most shops remained closed in Tual.

About 150 soldiers and police, deployed since the violence broke out on Wednesday, remained stationed at strategic points in the town, he said.

"Several shops have reopened but others remained closed as their owners have fled and sought refuge elsewhere," said a resident in nearby Langgur, separated only by a bridged narrow strait from Tual.

Maluku Governor Saleh Latuconsina, accompanied by officials who included the province's military and police chiefs, made a brief visit to Tual Saturday to visit riot-torn areas and talk with local leaders.

The cause of the violence there remained unclear, with one resident saying it stemmed from the discovery of graffiti slandering Islam in the mixed neighbourhood of Warhir last Saturday.

Others said it was sparked by the raucous actions of four drunken nightwatchmen at a market.

'Indian defence minister has close links with Tamil Tigers'

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An Indian opposition party leader on Saturday accused Defence Minister George Fernandes of secretly supporting Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger separatist guerrillas.

Subramanian Swamy, who heads the small centrist People's Party, told reporters that Fernandes had ordered the Indian navy not to intercept ships belonging to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Swamy alleged that Fernandes had also recently met LTTE representatives in Paris and awarded a defence ministry contract to Indian supporters of the rebels.

The defence minister is already in the eye of a storm over the controversial dismissal of navy chief Vishnu Bhagwat in December. The government said the admiral posed a security threat.

The sacked admiral has denied the charge and instead accused Fernandes of promoting favourites in the navy.

Fernandes could not be reached for comment on Swamy's charges.

Fernandes, a socialist, is a long-time supporter of the Tibetan cause for independence and of Myanmar pro-democracy activists. Two years ago he organised a conference of LTTE supporters at his New Delhi home.

The LTTE, which is fighting for a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka's north and east, is outlawed in India for allegedly assassinating former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.

Sri Lanka is separated from India by a narrow strip of sea, which is used by LTTE-owned ships to smuggle weapons and other war material.



Seven-day-old South Korean calf Jean-Ie poses for the camera in Seoul April 3. Jean-Ie was cloned from genes taken from an adult cow and weighed in at 27 kilos at birth. The South Korean research team which succeeded in cloning Jean-Ie say they hope to use the technology to mass produce the animal (Reuters photo)

Search for survivors resumes after Nigerian ferry sinks

PORT HARCOURT, Nigeria (AFP) — Search operations resumed Saturday for more survivors from the sinking of an overloaded ferry boat which went down in a tropical storm off southeast Nigeria.

By late Friday, 15 bodies had been found and 25 survivors brought to shore after the ferry boat MV George, believed to be carrying up to 300 people, sank in rough water 60 nautical miles along the coast from Port Harcourt late Thursday.

At dawn Saturday, boats were sent out to the area where the ferry sank with orders to find possible further survivors and pick up the bodies of the victims, marine union officials coordinating the search told reporters at the waterfront.

By midday, no reports had emerged of further survivors being found, they said.

Augustine Nwokinaka, spokesman for Rivers State military administrator Group Captain Sam Ewang, told reporters Friday that the MV George was authorised to carry up to 200 people and was believed to have been overloaded when

it sank around 10:00 p.m. Thursday.

Eyewitnesses told reporters that around 300 were aboard as the boat left Port Harcourt, while the boat's owners said 120 were aboard.

"I can confirm that the boat has sunk," Nwokinaka said Friday, adding: "Search parties are working round the clock to look for survivors."

The exact cause and circumstances of the sinking will not be known until a full investigation has been carried out, he said.

The boat, a wooden double-decker ferry used mainly by traders along the southeast coast, had set out from Port Harcourt at about 5:00 p.m. Thursday carrying mainly women and children heading home for the Easter weekend.

Weighed down by the number of passengers and hit by the storm, it appeared to have capsized in open seas, officials said Thursday.

Nigeria is currently in the middle of the rainy season, and storms regularly hit the tropical south of the country.

Boat sinkings are a common occurrence in Nigeria, regularly going unreported. Boats are often poorly maintained and overcrowded when they set sail in waters that can quickly turn rough.

Thursday's sinking was little reported in Saturday's Nigerian press, which concentrated its coverage on the World Youth Soccer Championship due to kick off in the country later in the day.

Nengi James, a local community leader and president of the Bayelsa Youth Federation, speaking to reporters on Friday, condemned the poor safety record of shipping in the area and said government should do more to enforce safety regulations.

"Government should be held responsible for this. It completely neglects marine transport and allows people to die," he said.

In April last year, 280 people died in the sinking of a Nigerian passenger boat heading towards Guinea.

Safety rules were not updated in the wake of that sinking, locals said.

Dissidents call on U.S. leaders to speak to premier on human rights

BEIJING (AP) — A member of a banned Chinese opposition party has written to President Bill Clinton urging him to mention the beleaguered party's plight when he meets with Premier Zhu Rongji in Washington.

Gao Hongmin, in a letter dated Saturday and faxed to the Associated Press, asked Clinton to encourage Zhu to back human rights improvements that would give Chinese freedom to voice their opinions and form opposition parties.

Zhu leaves Tuesday for a trip to the United States and Canada.

Gao is among Chinese activists who have continued to try to set up the China Democracy Party despite a government crackdown late last year that led to the imprisonment of three leading members.

Chinese leaders have said they would crush any attempt to threaten the Communist Party's monopoly on political

power.

Gao said he hoped Clinton would ask Zhu to encourage the Chinese Communist Party leadership to talk with members of the China democracy party on an equal basis. The goal, he added, should be to make China a "strong, rich and united modern country."

In another appeal, the wife of an imprisoned Chinese dissident urged American officials to put human rights abuses at the top of the agenda during Zhu's visit.

"People in the U.S. government should find every possible opportunity to discuss the human rights issue in China with him," Tang Xuanzhong told Associated Press Television News.

She was interviewed after visiting her husband, Wang Ce, in prison in Jinhuai, in eastern Zhejiang province.

Tang said her husband, who is 50, was suffering under harsh prison conditions that included limiting his drinking

water to one cup per day. She said he suffered from heart disease and found it difficult to keep up with the exercises imposed on the young criminals with whom he is imprisoned.

Wang left China in 1984 and earned a doctorate in political science at the University of Hawaii. He settled in Spain and was the chairman of a group of Chinese exiles, the Freedom and Democracy Party.

Wang sneaked into China in October after authorities refused to renew his passport, was arrested in November and put on trial in January.

He was sentenced to four years in prison for entering the country illegally and financing subversive activities. He gave \$1,000 to an unemployed member of the banned China Democracy Party, Wang Youcai. Wang, one of the three leading party members caught in the crackdown, was sentenced in December to 11 years in prison.

Philippine militiamen missing after rebel raids

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines (AFP) — Three members of a pro-government militia are missing and feared kidnapped after a Communist guerrilla raid in the southern Philippines island of Mindanao, the military said Saturday.

Three other militiamen were wounded but a soldier earlier reported missing after the raid by the New People's Army (NPA) has been found unharmed, military spokesman Colonel Horacio Lapinid said.

About 80 NPA guerrillas seized a small outpost manned by a platoon of infantrymen and members of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit near the town of La Paz Thursday, Lapinid said.

Lapinid identified the missing militiamen as Tenio Jabanan, Hickler Ignacio and Brangie Potenciano. The three are either dead or are in the hands of the NPA, he added.

Another NPA unit attacked a lightly-defended militia armoury near the town of Columbio on Tuesday and stole 19 firearms, military spokesman Captain Unting Alon said in nearby Cotabato city.

Two militiamen at the post were disarmed but were unharmed, he added.

Communist rebels have stepped up attacks in the south in recent months after peace talks between the government and guerrilla leaders based in the Netherlands bogged down.

The NPA seized a general, two other soldiers

and a police officer in February, forcing Estrada to cancel peace talks with the rebels.

The Communists on Saturday called on Estrada to pull out five infantry battalions and two army special forces units from four southern provinces to allow the rebels to free military hostages seized earlier.

The presence of these military units is "obstructing such safe and orderly release," rebel negotiator Luis Jalandoni said in a statement from his base in the Dutch city of Utrecht.

The rebels have said the captives would be freed before April 19 on humanitarian grounds.


But Jalandoni said Saturday that "a safe and orderly release is possible only if the Estrada regime withdraws all its field and manoeuvre units ... back to divisional or brigade barracks."

Jalandoni did not say whether the NPA is holding the three missing militiamen.

Estrada suspended military operations against the NPA from March 28 to make way for the release of the hostages.

The NPA is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Military officials say its strength has dwindled to under 7,000 fighters from a peak of 26,000 in the mid-1980s.

The movement has also split into factions since the collapse of communism worldwide in the early 1990s. However the military admits it has enjoyed a slight resurgence due to the Asian financial crisis.



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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975
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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

The wisdom of the rapid turnovers of cabinets

JORDANIAN GOVERNMENTS come and go very quickly. This has become a phenomenon that deserves to be evaluated. Results may be positive or negative based on many factors. Is it possible to determine the ideal duration of a government in order to obtain optimum results?

It is believed that Jordanian prime ministers are usually chosen for specific missions at specific points in time, and therefore one year is more than enough to tackle that mission and demonstrate success or failure in that respect. When the need for another mission arises, a new prime minister is appointed who is more fit for the new mission, and so on and so forth.

The drawback in too speedy a change of governments is loss of stability and continuity. This disadvantage does not apply to Jordan because the King is the top authority. His position is stable, and he can secure continuity and stability of policies. In this regard, we can look at the changes of governments as mere ministerial reshuffles.

Other than that, rapid turnover of governments has its costs and benefits. The first advantage is that the prime minister and ministers have no assurance of sufficient time to go slow and defer difficult decisions. They know that their time is limited and that they have to act, produce results, and prove themselves as swiftly as possible.

Change of governments and repeated reshuffles prevent stagnation in political life. Politicians, inside and outside the government, remain alert to signals issued here and there, trying to understand their meanings and respond accordingly.

A minister, who stays for several years in the same ministry may stagnate and start repeating

himself. He may keep reminding us of his previous achievements. A long serving minister will start to accept his ministry's shortcomings rather than correct them. He will be institutionalised and absorbed by the institution rather than be in charge of the institution.

Jordan has experience of long serving governments. Both Zeid Rifai and Mudar Badran formed governments which served for extended periods during the seventies and eighties. The results were not different. The political scene was at times led by the same faces raising the same slogans, repeating themselves over and over again.

Debating the ideal period for governments assumes that the effectiveness of a given government starts weakly and picks up steam gradually before it starts to slow down again and diminishes. This assumption has never been

proven. More likely, new governments start strong and with resolve which gradually wanes and slows with time.

The call for allowing governments longer time is based on the assumption that a new government comes with a specific programme, and therefore should be

Sunday's Economic Pulse



Dr. Fahed Faneek

given sufficient time to implement its programme. In fact, prime ministers and ministers will usually ask for a period of grace to study the issues at hand and think of possible action before he is expected to act. In other words he comes to the ministry to learn, not to lead.

The change that can disturb stability is a sudden change of policies and strategies. Change of persons, while policies and strategies remain constant, is only adding new blood, vigour, and energy to produce desired results.

Until such time when Jordan has a strong political party, which controls the majority of seats in the Parliament, and can rule for four years, it may be better to give a government a minimum of one year. After the first year, the change will be decided, for or against, based on performance.

Holding out for good faith

THAT PRIME MINISTER Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh publicly minced no words about the Kingdom's economic status and admitted that it is indeed in recession set his reading of his government's policy statement off to a good start. His concentration on seeking ways to reactivate the economy may be as well-meaning as it is challenging. His government's intention to revamp the judiciary and grant it a separate budget from the Justice Ministry should also be applauded.

Yet although in the first weeks of his tenure Rawabdeh held ice-breaking meetings with the leaders of the professional associations and political parties, thus making a positive impression and encouraging hopes for political change, there was no mention in yesterday's policy statement of the Elections Law, which has been at the centre of national debate for the past six years.

High expectations, nurtured by Rawabdeh's declaration to the political parties 10 days ago — "I am with you, against this elections law" — were dampened by what appeared to be a substantial lack of political reforms on the new government's agenda.

Neither was there any mention of amendments to the 1992 Political Parties Law — that many say not only features loopholes hindering the development of political party culture, but also introduces restrictions to constitutional liberties — nor was there any reference to the Professional Associations Law.

Furthermore, there was no specific reference to our shameful and draconian press law; only the vaguest terms were used to delineate the future of the press. This too was somewhat of a letdown, since His Majesty King Abdullah, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti and Rawabdeh himself had earlier and promptly urged concerned parties to submit their recommended amendments to the law.

Perhaps it was an oversight, or perhaps it is because the government is in fact trying to secure a confidence vote in a Parliament elected under the current Elections Law and in which several influential members are known to be satisfied with an acquiescent press.

Therefore, we can only take the premier's prior words and gestures on good faith, and rely on what we already know — that the Press and Publications Department recently submitted an exhaustive list of amendments to the Prime Ministry for review — to keep our morale high.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneek commented on the debts of three public entities, asking who, how and when the debts will be paid. The Water Authority, which has a JD600 million debt, is expected to record another JD50 million in losses this year, and the same number next year, Faneek said. The Royal Jordanian's debt amounts to JD500 million and was expected to record JD3 million deficit a month, the writer added. Moreover, he said, the Aqaba Railway has JD60 million debt and was scheduled to need JD3 million more to pay its current expenditures. How is the government going to guarantee such amounts, especially that everybody knows that the treasury, which suffers a deficit, does not have enough reserves to pay these debts, asked Faneek. Things went this way in past and may get worse in the future because officials neither want to admit the "bitter" facts, nor face them, Faneek criticised. Such liabilities, which are relatively very heavy, will double the debt three times and they are a "time bomb" which will explode, Faneek said.

Al Dustour's editorial said the Israeli stand towards the Kosovo crisis raises more questions. Israel is hesitating in giving full support to NATO attacks, not because the Jewish state wants to oppose the allies or is concerned about international legitimacy, but because if it does so, it might find itself in critical position later, said the editorial. It added that Israel does not want to remind the world of its crimes against the Palestinians, especially those committed in 1948. The Israeli stand is also strange as the Jewish state, which was the cause of the suffering and the killing of four million Palestinians, 500,000 Lebanese and thousands of Syrians, tries now to provide humanitarian aid to Kosovo's Muslims, said the newspaper. The Yugoslavian president's war crimes are not the same as Israel's "dirty" actions committed by military generals, who currently rule Israel, against the peoples of Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt, claimed the editorial. The paper called on the international community to stand firm against all war criminals in the world, including those in Tel Aviv and Kosovo.



Kosovo: Saving private Stone

By Gwynne Dyer

"WE ARE pretty much in a state of shock," said Jim Stone, father of one of the three American soldiers taken prisoner by Serbs on Wednesday on the Kosovo-Macedonian border. "This is not the sort of thing you expect." It isn't? U.S. planes are bombing Serbia, a full-scale Serbian genocide is underway against the Albanians of Kosovo, hundreds or perhaps thousands of people are being killed each night, and you didn't expect anything to happen to American soldiers who were within reach of the Serbs? My apologies to Mr. Stone, whose shock is understandable. You are never prepared for bad things to happen to your own family. But for the past few days the entire American media have been devoting as much attention to these three unlucky young men — who didn't look that much worse on television than I have looked myself a couple of times after saying the wrong thing in the wrong bar — as they have to all the rest of the war.

The United States is at war with Serbia, for all practical purposes, as are Britain, and Germany, and Canada, and Belgium, and all the other members of NATO. In wars, people get killed, and even more get hurt. (That is why most countries try very hard to avoid them.)

Yet the American media pretend to be astonished at the fact that three American soldiers have been not killed, not even wounded, but just captured. That just about sums up what is wrong with the current Western approach to war.

Imagine, for a moment, that it's 1943 again, but with today's media. Thousands of Russian and German soldiers are dying daily in titanic battles on the Eastern Front, and thousands of Jews (plus hundreds of gypsies, homosexuals, and other undesirables) are being murdered daily in Nazi death camps. But the Western allies do not yet have any troops fighting on the ground in Europe, though their bombers are pounding Germany day and night.

It's 30 March, 1943, and an American B-17 gets shot down over Germany — not ten or twenty bombers, as often happened in real raids, but just one. The crew bail out, or maybe some of them go down with the plane.

And what happens next? Well, the major networks all interrupt their schedules to run specials about it, complete with biographies of the aircrew, interviews with their distraught families, and pundits wondering whether President Roosevelt's opinion poll figures will survive this tragedy. After all, his popularity is already down four points on last week. Popular support for

the war might collapse if the number of dead Americans goes into double digits.

Wolf Blitzer's predecessor and a hundred other analysts, all propped up outside the Pentagon or the White House like so many birds on a wire, wonder for the cameras whether the U.S. Eighth Air Force can go on bombing Europe if this sort of thing happens again. It's been weeks already, and Hitler still hasn't given up.

Then comes the chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, publicly questioning whether the crew of the downed B-17 should have been sent into such a dangerous environment. His committee will be looking carefully into the circumstances in which these American airmen were sent into an area where Germans might shoot back. Finally, at the end of another hectic media day, the president goes on television and warns Hitler that he will be held personally responsible for the safety of the downed American airmen. Unspecified but dreadful things will be done to him if he harms a hair on their heads. But the president also repeats his long-standing promise that U.S. troops will not be committed to ground combat in Europe. The bombing campaign will continue, hopefully without any more American losses, until Hitler comes to his senses and surrenders to the war crimes tribunal.

Perhaps I am labouring the point, but let me hit it over the head one more time. Since NATO began bombing Serbia, around half-a-dozen policemen have been killed in the line of duty in the United States alone, protecting the communities they live in. Everybody (or almost everybody) honours their sacrifice, and is deeply grateful that they do their jobs as well and bravely as most of them do. But we don't know their names. CNN is not doing specials on them. Senators are not questioning whether they should have been sent into such dangerous situations. Nobody interviews the families of murdered police officers on national television, and the rent-a-pundit mob do not publicly ponder on what their deaths imply for the future of law enforcement. It is treated, sadly but rightly, as part of the price that we (or rather, some of us) routinely pay for living in a reasonably safe and civilised society.

Soldiers who have been deployed to stop a horror like the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo are doing essentially the same job, except on the international scene, and the goal is the same: to ensure that people can live in a reasonably safe and civilised society. You may argue with the legality of NATO's military intervention in Kosovo/Serbia, but I have yet to see anybody argue convincingly

'...the American media pretend to be astonished at the fact that three American soldiers have been not killed, not wounded, but just captured'

that it is being done for self-interested motives. There was oil in Kuwait, but there is certainly none in Kosovo.

So why are the lives of the soldiers sent to do that job being treated as so much more precious than those of the police who do the same job at home? That is simply and purely a media phenomenon, exclusive to developed, media-saturated societies where the television networks, as part of the struggle for ratings, have increasingly turned news into soap opera.

Wars are particularly susceptible to this treatment, since they usually happen in locations that seem exotic to the target audience — and you can get your cameras there beforehand, since you know roughly where it will happen. It's Hollywood: every casualty becomes 'Saving Private Ryan,' and every individual soldier's life a thousand times more newsworthy than the lives of those who die at home from car smashers or gunfire or just from poverty and despair.

It is good that the motives and conduct of every war be questioned every day. It is also good that societies have learned to care more about the lives of at least some individuals. But this is a gross distortion of humanitarianism, in which the bruises and blood on Private Stone's face matter more than the thousands of other young men, not Americans but Albanian Kosovars, who were dumped into shallow graves by Serbian executioners this week.

And it causes equally great distortions in strategy. 'No ground troops' is the mantra of people for whom the media truly is the message.

They have lost sight of the real world.

The writer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries

Letters to the editor

The 'moral imperative'

AT A time when Iraq is criticised for cooperating with Serbia against a common enemy, and the United States — who can usually get what it wants in the Security Council — no longer feels the need to go through the trouble before it bombs a sovereign country, a certain amount of moral justification for attacking Serbia may seem to emerge from Belgrade's policy of forced expulsion of tens of thousands of civilians from their homes.

But hold on, need I point out the contradiction? Is ethnic cleansing something new? In at least one example, in our own neighbourhood, it's been going on for over 50 years. Terror, expulsion, massacres, home demolitions, daily hardships, refugees, erasing of identities, violations of international law, of the U.N. charter, of U.N. resolutions, of the Geneva convention... you name it. There has never been a better time to draw the world's attention to the plight of the Palestinians, and contrast it with what is happening in Kosovo, even better, to contrast the "moral imperative", to use Clinton's parlance, in the two catastrophes.

Let us see, if only as an intellectual exercise, how NATO is going to weasel its way out of the moral trap this time.

Hazem S. Biqa'een
 Rhode Island
 U.S.

A national malaise

WITH REFERENCE to the March 25th letter of Mr. Gillespie concerning the "bad" reception he had at the Muntaz post office, I offer my apologies as a Jordanian, aware of our almost national malaise for not caring to do our job properly.

Last night, we had a European lady who had to go to the airport at night to board her flight to Europe. She was told to take the airport express bus at midnight from Abdali. Upon informing me, I wondered whether the bus would turn up on time. Just before midnight, my wife and myself drove her to the bus stop and waited there till past midnight. The stories related by the taxi drivers milling around the bus-stop and a lonely policeman differed widely: some maintained that it should turn up any moment, others saying that it is normally a few minutes late. However the best story was that if it does not turn up at 12, it normally does so at 12:30. If not, then it will turn up at 1:00. Otherwise it should show up at either 1:30 or 2:00.

Not daring to think beyond 2 a.m., we decided to put her in a taxi and send her on her way.

Freddy Lama
 Amman

'Smoked' by our neighbours

COMPARATIVELY SPEAKING our country is far behind our neighbours in tobacco legislation. Our Gulf neighbours (GCC) are a mixed group. Kuwait has the strictest legislation. There is an age limit set at 21. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE have age limits of 16, 18 and 18 respectively. All GCC countries have strict levels of maximum tar and nicotine set at 12 and 0.8 mg respectively. Syria is as lax as us: possibly because 16,000 hectares of land is used for tobacco production (Jordan only has about 2,400 hectares).

Kuwait has forbidden smoking on buses, ferries, while driving motor vehicles and for restaurant staff. Israel has eliminated smoking in cinemas, restaurants, banks, schools, universities, public libraries, post offices, elevators, and governmental offices, and there is no smoking on public transport, internal flights, and in the workplace.

Aspiring to enter the EU, we must at least begin to conform to their regulations. EU countries are required to have cigarette boxes carry warnings to cover 6 per cent of the surface on which they are printed. Other tobacco products must have a warning of 1.5 per cent of total surface.

It is interesting to note that Canada has spent \$135 million for tobacco control activities and research over a three-year period, which was raised by a special 3 per cent surtax on tobacco company profits.

Yasar Atiyeh
 Amman

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

'Tis true; 'tis pity, and pity 'tis, 'tis true 'Tis total tosh

By Howard Jacobson

YES, YES, it's nice for everybody — nice for the British film industry, nice for the investors, nice for Dame Judi, nice for Marc, nice for Sir Tom, nice for Gwyneth (though maybe not so nice for all those genuinely British Violas who might have been up for the part had someone not been thinking Oscars from the very beginning) but still, yes, yes, nice. And God knows the last thing one wants to do is spoil a good party. But Shakespeare in Love. Best Film, in any company, in any year, judged by any standards — my masters, are you mad?

Let me be blunt, so that we need not waste time on preliminaries. The film is tosh. 'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis, 'tis true — the film is tosh. Literate tosh. I grant you, but that somehow makes it worse. All those fine words and grand cadences — almost all of them Shakespeare's — thrown away on such piffing matter. All that erudition and understanding — almost all of it Shakespeare's — serving that single joke most calculated to please the plainest and most uninformed minds: The anachronism gag. You think wink-wink shots of souvenirs of Stratford are funny? You think an Elizabethan bargeman telling Shakespeare that he had that Christopher Marlowe in the back of the boat is funny? Best film funny? Then you are wrong.

Before a nudge from that same Christopher Marlowe and a decisive glimpse of Gwyneth's boyish banded nipples, Shakespeare was intended to call his new play Ethel the Pirate's Daughter. That strike you as funny? Piquant in some way? Trenchant? Allusive to some telling silliness in the Elizabethan imagination? Wrong again.

I watched the film in the company of somebody who is, as the saying goes, "in the industry." He was alive to all the jokes about producers and money-men. In making a film about putting on a play, the makers of Shakespeare

'Was it Rodin who said he sculpted with his penis? The message of Shakespeare in Love is that Shakespeare wrote with his'

in Love were really making a film about putting on a film. I begrudge no man the pleasure of an in joke. Didn't I, along with everyone else with a degree in English Literature, laugh at visual references to the ghoulish apprenticeship of John Webster? I did. But in the end an in joke is a species of flattery. And he does me double wrong, that wounds me with the flatteries of his tongue.

I am not going to contest the comedy. That Monty Python did it better 25 years will go without saying to anyone who was alive that long ago. That The Fast Show does it better now also seems to me unanswerable. So it was smart of the casting director to use members of The Fast Show in the film. For there is an inevitable Carry On factor at work. Put in comic actors from a funny television show and they will get laughs willy-nilly. That's the dangerous downside of laughter: It is Pavlovian. But it is not because Shakespeare in Love wishes us to laugh at what isn't in its own right funny that it's tosh. That would make it no more than a failure, something which, in other circumstances, might

just have been a success. Shakespeare in Love could never have been a success. It has no foundations: it is a feeble construct on an ugly and baseless idea. Namely that Shakespeare was a dickhead with a Boyzone range of thoughts, suffering a soap star's depression in conjunction with a romantic novelist's writer's block.

I'll be round with you. It's not on Shakespeare's behalf that this bothers me. We must assume, by now, that Shakespeare can take care of himself. Even the best jokes against his tendency to blustering grandiloquence and pedantry — remember those incomparable take-offs of the History Plays in Beyond the Fringe? — have left his reputation unimpaired. No: For Shakespeare himself, who on an off-day could compose bombast to equal The Lakes and is therefore ripe for ridicule, I entertain no anxieties. It's us who should be worried for: Who is it out there who thinks this is the only Shakespeare we can take? How does it behave us as a species, how does it help us, to believe that art is made by a moron in love?

Unable to proceed with Ethel the Pirate's Daughter, not given to reading or thinking much, but forever mooning in regulation period Eastcheap or wherever it is that Elizabethans are deemed to have shouted a lot and bustled unnecessarily, considering that shops weren't open for as long as they are now (anachronism joke). Shakespeare encounters Gwyneth, falls in love with her, her voice coach has taught her to pronounce English and bow many lines she knows from plays he hasn't written yet, and subsequently spills out of her bed carrying pages of manuscript. Was it Rodin who said he sculpted with his penis? The message of Shakespeare in Love is that Shakespeare wrote with his. Gwyneth, bed, nipples, love, moan, morning, manuscript Magic. No ink. No pen. Nothing. Just Gwyneth in his arms and that's Romeo and Juliet completed. Next? Well, next in the film's

solipsistic romantic chronology is Twelfth Night and that's all to do with Gwyneth also. Steadfast in life, she must be the model for Sebastian's constant sister. For surely Shakespeare could never have imagined constancy?

We are out of the cinema long before we get to any problem plays (Shakespeare in a Bit of Tizz-Wozzy?) let alone the tragedies (Shakespeare Upset?). Which is probably for the best.

Plucking out the heart of Shakespeare's mystery is the name of the game. Behind the offered good-naturedness of the film's determined anti-intellectualism lies a mean-minded academic conspiracy. The conspiracy of the historicists. You will find historicists in every university in the world, invariably the deliverers of the dullest lectures because they believe in dullness with a flameless passion. They are the ones who tell you that nothing is ever to be understood in any work of literature unless you know everything about the time in which it was written, and what precisely befell its writer. For this is the beginning and the end of their own expertise. Any interest in the writer's intelligence or imagination, the largeness of his mind, his power to infuse his particular experience with general thought, is considered uneducated, unacademic, fanciful and unreliable.

On the surface this is anti-populist because it gives primacy to scholarship and abstruse knowledge. No work is truly open to you, it says, because you don't know enough. But it meets the present preoccupation with finding a voice in which to please everyone — dumbing down, if you like — in this way: It makes us all equal before the accidents of experience. No one is exceptional. No one makes choices of a different order to the choices we all make. No one is serious. No one is serious. No one seeks to be unconfined by the common.

Odd, that a moment in the history of



the obfuscation of literature should have found popular expression in a movie which flatters ignorance and incuriosity. But maybe everything is now tending to lightness. Fall in love, go on stage, take your pants off, have a laugh, be a sport. Live in your context.

In fact Shakespeare in Love tells us a lot more about us than about Shakespeare. The film would pluck out the heart of his mystery, but it doesn't sound him to the top of his compass. It merely sounds our own lowest notes.

— The Independent

First-time exhibit celebrates Poland's forgotten golden age

By Mary Gabriel
Reuters

AS MOVIEGOERS relive England's golden age under Elizabeth I, the museum world is celebrating Poland's golden age with an exhibition that includes treasures stolen by the Nazis or hidden behind the Iron Curtain after 1944.

"Land of the Winged Horsemen: Art in Poland, 1572-1764," offers a glimpse into a forgotten period when the arts in Poland flourished as religious tolerance attracted foreigners persecuted in their own countries and military might helped make Poland the largest nation in Europe.

"I was stunned that this thrilling and pivotal chapter of European history had been silenced for so long," said Ellen Reeder, curator of ancient art at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore where the travelling exhibition opened this month.

Because of cold war-era policies that isolated Eastern Europe from the west, Poland and its rich culture have remained a "gray blur" for most people, Reeder said.

"The country was so isolated, the publications weren't there, there were simply no really good images of Poland in film or television. What's remarkable is that this isolation has continued even now that the iron curtain is gone." The "Winged Horsemen" exhibition is an attempt to remove Poland from what Reeder called "the map of forgetting." It includes 150 works gathered from 35 Polish museums by Wawel Royal Castle Director Jan Ostrowski, Warsaw Royal Castle Director Andrzej Ronermond and Poland's "cultural ambassador at large" Count Andrew Ciechanowiecki.

Some of the pieces are on view for the first time since undergoing extensive conservation work and most are being seen for the first time outside Poland.

Exhibit highlights Poland's military among the most fascinating objects in the exhibition are the crown, sceptre and orb from the coronation of Augustus III in 1733. The pieces illustrate not only the artistry of Polish jewellers but the tortured history of Poland's recent past.

The heavily jewelled objects, including emeralds, rubies, sapphires and diamonds borrowed from the Dresden crown jewels, were stolen by the Nazis and taken to Germany. Then they were stolen by the Red Army and held in the Soviet Union until 1960 when they were returned to the National Museum in Warsaw.

The 20th-century pillage of Poland's treasures is a far cry from the country's more distant past. Through much of the 16th to 18th centuries, the commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania constituted the largest land empire in Europe, stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. As the easternmost extension of the Roman Catholic church, Poland was considered the "defender of the faith" against the Ottoman empire.

Poles under King John Sobieski III defeated the Turks in the 1683 battle of Vienna, the most important in pre-modern Europe. A linen tent captured in that decisive campaign is on display in the "Winged Horsemen" exhibition, as is weaponry from Sobieski's fighters including armour worn by the Husaria heavy cavalry from which the exhibition gets its name.

The Husaria wore massive backpacks of eagle wings that resembled feathered headdresses worn by American Indians. As the "Winged Horsemen" charged into battle, their head-dresses vibrated to produce a sound that terrified their enemy.

Artists drawn by Polish religious tolerance artists took refuge in Poland during its golden age, attracted by its stability ensured by a fierce military and its religious tolerance, which was decreed by law.

In 1573, the confederation of Warsaw stated that no one could be persecuted for their religious beliefs. As a result, Poland became a haven for persecuted people and the largest refuge for European Jewry. And that same year Poland held its first free election to select a king, ushering in a long reign of monarchs who were subject to the vote.

A magnificent painting in the form of a frieze, "entry of the wedding procession of constance of Austria and Sigismund III into Cracow," known as the "Stockholm roll" because it was held in Sweden until 1974, was painted by an anonymous artist around 1605, at the height of Poland's royal court splendour.

"The moment the marriage of the king of Poland is taking place is the same time Shakespeare is writing at the Globe Theatre," Reeder said. "It was a time of great excitement and great energy." Paintings, ceramics, glass and textiles illustrate the influence of both the east and west on Poland's cultural life as artists created local schools that flourished under the patronage of fabulously wealthy families — the Czartoryskis, Ossolinskis, Radziwills, Lubomirskis and Potockis.



'Land of Winged Horsemen: Art in Poland, 1572-1764,' offers a glimpse into a forgotten period and includes this 17th century copy of 'Our Lady of Czestochowa' that has been deemed miraculous (Reuters photo)

When asked if the Radziwill family lived like royalty, one member once said, "I live like a Radziwill, the king can do as he pleases." Examples of the works the magnate families commissioned show the sophistication of the artists and provide windows into the world of the Polish aristocracy.

An enigmatic portrait of countess Anna Orzelska, the illegitimate daughter of King Augustus II, is an example of Poland's liberal stance on women's rights. Orzelska, who under Polish law had the same rights of inheritance as her brother, used her wealth to support the arts.

The importance of religion in the lives of Poles in the 16th to 18th centuries is evident in works throughout the exhibition. But the centrepiece of the show is a religious artefact that many claim has miraculous powers.

A 15th-century painting of "Our Lady of Czestochowa" was slashed by thieves in a failed robbery attempt and the portrait was said to bleed from the cuts. A 17th-century copy of the painting has also been designated as miraculous and has been the object of pilgrimages to Lvov, where it was previously located, and to Cracow, where it now hangs in the Carmelite Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The copy, which includes the marks the robbers' knives made on the 15th-century original, is on view in "Winged Horsemen" — its first showing since an extensive conservation project and the first showing ever outside Poland.

The exhibition ends in Warsaw next year at the newly restored royal castle, which was destroyed during World War II.

Thinking and juggling like Leonardo

By Mark Egan
Reuters

HE COOKED a mean minestrone, bent horseshoes with his bare hands, threw killer parties and was a juggler beyond compare. And now, thanks to a new self-help book, you could be like him.

But maybe you are more interested in being a world-class painter, an ingenious inventor and a brilliant thinker. Either way, the newly published "how to think like Leonardo Da Vinci" (Delacorte Press) might be just the ticket.

Even though Da Vinci has been dead for almost 500 years, many still regard him as the greatest genius ever and the quintessential "renaissance man." Among his biggest fans is author Michael Gelb, who has made a career of improving himself and telling others how to do likewise.

Indeed Gelb claims his two greatest heroes as a child were Superman and Da Vinci. He stopped worshipping the "man of steel" once he became old enough to dismiss it as fantasy but he still reveres Da Vinci as the supreme maestro.

After years of immersing himself in all things Leonardo, Gelb has boiled down the man's mind into seven simple steps that can help you think like a genius every day.

While you should not expect to read Gelb's book and be painting Mona Lisas or inventing submarines and helicopters overnight, you should at least be able to programme your VCR.

"I'm not saying you're going to paint the Mona Lisa or invent the equivalent of the bicycle," Gelb told Reuters in an interview. "While you won't become Leonardo Da Vinci, the idea is that each person is gifted with more ability than they are usually taking advantage of." Five years ago, Gelb gave a presentation on Da Vinci's creative thinking to a conference of company presidents in Florence, Italy. His speech was such a big hit that Gelb spent more and more time delving into what made the genius tick.

"The interest I had through my life in Leonardo became an overwhelming passion," he said. "I started dreaming about him. The more I learned about him the more I learned about his incredible gifts and talents and genius."

In order to think like the great man, Gelb has devised what he calls "the seven Da Vinci principles." The first is "curiosita," or a desire to learn more. When children start asking questions like "daddy, where do babies come from?" they are taking the first step in thinking like Da Vinci.

The other principles are willingness to learn from mistakes and experiences, continual refinement of the senses, embracing ambiguity and paradox, developing "whole-brain" thinking, and culti-

vating grace, ambidexterity, fitness and poise. The final principle is to discover how all the others fit together and how everything connects to everything else.

The book carries an enthusiastic, two-thumbs-up endorsement on the back cover from the Da Vinci of self-help, Deepak Chopra: "Gelb guides us in a discovery and understanding of the boundlessness of our own full human potential." High praise indeed. But what exactly will readers learn from the book?

Readers are given practical tips about how to act like Da Vinci, starting with keeping a notebook handy to record their inspirations. Exercises include pretending to smile like the Mona Lisa and then asking yourself how it makes you feel.

Won't cynics say that is just ridiculous? "Most cynics are broken-hearted idealists," Gelb replied, sounding like a true self-help guru.

"The people who are most creative and most effective in actually doing something creative and different are the ones who are laughing and seeing humour in the situation." A section of the book is devoted to wine tasting, another to listening to great music. Readers are told how to use their fingers to "touch like an angel" and encouraged to "vocalise the sounds inspired by the colours" of a favourite painting.

And if all those exercises make you hungry, the book even has a recipe for minestrone soup, Leonardo's favourite dish.

Since Da Vinci's own recipe was not available, Gelb offers readers his grandma Rosa's mouth-watering concoction instead.

For fans of "The Last Supper," a large section of the book is devoted to "the beginner's Da Vinci drawing course." The book also tells readers to get fit, sit up straight and even how to juggle, a talent shared by Da Vinci and Gelb.

Gelb worked his way through graduate school in the 1970s as a juggler. In the late '70s he reached jugglers nirvana when he performed on-stage with the Rolling Stones at the Knebworth rock festival. And like any self-help guru he used that experience to write a book, "Lessons From the Art of Juggling: How to Achieve Your Full Potential in Business, Learning and Life." But do not expect your life to become a bed of roses even after you have soaked up all the wisdom imparted in Gelb's books. After two decades of telling others how to improve their lives, even he admits to being a failure in some ways.

"Today is the day my divorce is being filed. That's my biggest failure," Gelb said. "Just as Leonardo made huge mistakes, I've made them too. But the point is to learn from them quickly and not repeat them."

Rising oil prices ease Gulf economic pressure but austerity remains

DUBAI (AFP) — The boost in global oil prices following cuts in OPEC production will ease pressure on the Gulf states' ailing economies but is unlikely to reverse austere budgets, analysts said Saturday.

Recent gains in crude prices could help cut deficits in the region by as much as a third, some analysts said, but the increases will not be enough to spur

the now cautious Gulf governments into higher spending plans.

"The recent improvement in prices is very comforting to the regional governments, they are now getting two to three dollars a barrel more than they assumed in their budgets," said Oman-based Mohammad Abdul Jabr, a senior associate with the Washington-based Petroleum Finance Company.

"In terms of budget deficits I think we have seen the bottom. These prices could improve deficits by as much as a third in some cases," he added.

But Husam Meshal, an economist with the Kuwait-based Al Shail Economic Consultants, warned that even though "the expectation is that deficits will improve... they will stick to their budgets."

"The perception of this price rise will be good and that should help stimulate the economies, although it is still a wait-and-see situation," he said.

Last month's decision by OPEC and non-OPEC producers to shave an additional 2.1 million barrels per day off their total production from this month has already buoyed market sentiment.

On Wednesday, bench-

mark Brent North Sea crude for May delivery rose above \$15 in London, its highest level in 10 months.

The gains have had a marked effect on regional stock markets, especially in Saudi Arabia, but investors remain cautious, said Beshr Bakheet, senior partner with Riyadh-based Bakheet Financial Advisors.

"Assuming that prices remain at this level, then I think we will see a return of

confidence, improved liquidity and less speculation on (regional) currencies," he said.

The issue is now whether recent crude price gains can be sustained, he said, and whether the heavily oil-dependent Gulf economies can reap the full benefit of their crude production cuts.

Previous lapses in compliance will mean "the markets will be watching compliance very carefully. They

need a couple of months of strict compliance to sustain this market sentiment," Meshal said.

But the Kuwait-based economist remained optimistic that compliance with new cuts could run as high as 75 per cent "for a while."

Abdul Jabr said compliance with the new cuts might not exceed 60 per cent, although even at this level prices should average \$12.50 to \$13 for the year.

similar to last year's average and well above budgetary estimates.

Just as spending plans are expected to remain unaffected by recent gains in oil prices, so too are the Gulf states' slow moves towards economic reform, analysts said.

In a speech last month in Abu Dhabi that came just one day before a preliminary OPEC production cut agreement, Arab Monetary Fund Director General Jassim Al-Mannai said any major reforms were "unlikely" in the short term. Most Gulf states' "budget structure is so rigid that the margin of manoeuvre seems to be very limited... drastic economic reform is unlikely to be envisaged at least for the time being," he said.

But analysts like Bakheet remain optimistic that reforms begun before or during the oil price crisis would continue despite the recovery in crude prices, particularly in the area of privatisation.

As far as Saudi Arabia is concerned, "it is a long term objective and we shouldn't overplay the role of oil prices in this process," he said.

Jordan Investment Trust P.L.C.

JORDINVEST



شركة الثقة للاستثمارات الأردنية م.م

جوردان انستيت

The Bonds having been issued and placed
This announcement appears as a matter of record

JD. 3,500,000

Convertible Bonds

for

Union Chemicals & Vegetable Oil Industries plc.

Jordan

Arranged, Underwritten and Managed

by

Jordan Investment Trust (JORDINVEST)

placing agents

Jordan Investment Trust
(JORDINVEST)
Jordan

Gulfinvest International K.S.C.
(GULFINVEST)
Kuwait

March 1999

Exchange Rates

Thursday, 01-04-99

CURRENCY	JORDAN DINAR	SAUDI RYAL	U.A.E. DIRHAM	BAHRAIN DINAR	QATAR RYAL	OMAN RYAL	YEMEN RYAL	EGYPT POUND	LIBYAN DINA	US DOLLAR	BRITISH STERLING	GERMAN MARK	SWITZERLAND FRAN	FRANCE FRANC	JAPAN YEN	HOLLAND GILDER	ITALY LIRA	EURO
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1527	1.8750	1.8387	0.1945	2.3002	0.2071	0.1085									
SAUDI RYAL	5.2978	1.0000	1.0211	9.9488	9.7408	1.0301	12.1855	1.1026	3.7501									
U.A.E. DIRHAM	5.1881	0.9793	1.0000	9.7432	9.5395	1.0088	11.8337	1.0718	3.6122									
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.5335	0.1005	0.1026	1.0000	0.9791	0.1035	1.2248	0.1105	0.3725									
QATAR RYAL	0.5439	0.1027	0.1048	1.0214	1.0000	0.1058	1.2510	0.1130	0.3851									
OMAN RYAL	5.1427	0.9708	0.9912	9.6878	9.4858	1.0000	11.8229	1.0684	3.6413									
YEMEN RYAL	0.4347	0.0821	0.0838	0.9164	0.7994	0.0845	1.0000	0.0903	0.3073									
EGYPT POUND	4.8138	0.9085	0.9278	9.0398	8.8508	0.9360	11.0721	1.0200	3.4282									
LIBYAN DINA	21.2147	4.0045	4.0891	39.8408	39.0079	4.1252	48.7979	4.4013	15.0202									
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2686	0.2722	2.6525	2.5971	0.2746	3.2489	0.2934	1.0272									
BRITISH STERLING	0.8767	0.1655	0.1690	1.6465	1.6121	0.1705	2.0167	0.1621	0.5627									
GERMAN MARK	2.9708	0.4883	0.4925	4.8279	4.7258	0.4889	5.9133	0.5341	1.8321									
SWITZERLAND FRAN	2.0963	0.3961	0.4044	3.9405	3.8382	0.4061	4.8265	0.4359	1.4856									
FRANCE FRANC	8.6215	1.6274	1.6618	16.1910	15.8525	1.6765	19.8311	1.7911	6.1042									
JAPAN YEN	1.8843	0.3179	0.3248	3.1631	3.0970	0.3275	3.8743	0.3499	1.1925									
HOLLAND GILDER	2.8965	0.5468	0.5583	5.4395	5.3258	0.5632	6.6624	0.6017	2.0527									
ITALY LIRA	11.7083	2.2101	2.2565	21.8881	21.5284	2.2767	26.9314	2.4324	8.2695									
EURO	25.4499	4.8040	4.9054	47.7944	46.7952	4.8488	58.5386	5.2871	18.0155									
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	50.1226	10.0088	10.2200	97.5756	97.4338	10.3104	121.9523	11.0153	37.5420									
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	2.2271	0.4024	0.4093	4.1825	4.0950	0.4331	5.1228	0.4627	1.5769									
INDONESIA RUPIAH	4.2938	0.8105	0.8276	8.0631	7.8951	0.8349	9.8765	0.8923	3.0425									
THAI BATH	0.7585	0.1432	0.1462	1.4264	1.3946	0.1475	1.7445	0.1576	0.5370									
TAIWAN DOLLAR	18.0853	3.4139	3.4859	33.9639	33.2835	3.5187	41.5997	3.7572	12.8244									
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1284	0.4018	0.4102	3.9971	3.9135	0.4139	4.8957	0.4422	1.5064									
EURO	1.3140	0.2480	0.2533	2.4877	2.4191	0.2565	3.0225	0.2739	0.9203									

CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	BRITISH STERLING	GERMAN MARK	SWITZERLAND FRAN	FRANCE FRANC	JAPAN YEN	HOLLAND GILDER	ITALY LIRA	EURO
US DOLLAR	1.0000	0.6110	0.5494	0.5731	0.5638	0.8386	0.4876	5.5439	1.1748
BRITISH STERLING	0.6227	1.0000	0.3410	0.4178	0.5117	0.5225	0.3227	3.4455	0.6672
GERMAN MARK	1.6201	2.9322	1.0000	1.2521	0.2582	1.5253	0.8875	10.1013	1.9584
SWITZERLAND FRAN	1.4856	2.3933	0.7962	1.0000	0.2434	1.2458	0.7244	8.2445	1.5569
FRANCE FRANC	6.1042	9.8335	2.2537	4.1268	1.0000	5.1167	2.9755	33.8763	6.5612
JAPAN YEN	119.2630	192.1118	65.8184	82.3756	19.6364	1.0000	58.1539	661.8198	129.1818
HOLLAND GILDER	2.0527	3.3237	1.1267	1.3824	0.3362	0.1797	1.0000	11.3811	2.2043
ITALY LIRA	8.2695	13.2544	4.5544	5.5799	1.5532	6.9514	4.5423	46.3055	9.5124
EURO	18.0155	29.3278	9.8991	12.1288	2.6519	15.1099	8.7665	1.0000	19.3681
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	37.5420	60.4769	20.6212	25.2693	6.1501	31.4821	18.3252	208.3414	40.3517
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.5769	2.5422	0.8663	1.0644	0.2583	1.3223	0.7689	8.7509	1.6949
INDONESIA RUPIAH	3.0425	4.8974	1.6702	2.2463	0.4582	2.5430	1.4924	16.9715	3.2577
THAI BATH	0.5370	0.8557	0.2562	0.3265	0.2865	0.4522	0.2615	2.9953	0.5772
TAIWAN DOLLAR	12.8244	20.5273	7.4252	9.6190	2.5917	12.7374	6.2439	71.2625	13.7634
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5064	2.4276	0.8279	1.0143	0.2465	2.6336	0.7348	8.3631	1.5128
EURO	0.9203	1.4987	0.5111	0.6267	0.1514	0.7821	0.4531	5.4631	1.0000

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS.

DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES

CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR
US DOLLAR	4.8800	4.6200	4.4300	4.2500
BRITISH STERLING	5.1800	4.9200	4.7300	4.5500
EURO	3.8700	3.6100	3.4200	3.2400
GERMAN MARK	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
SWITZERLAND FRAN	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
JAPAN YEN	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSE	CHANGE
FRANKFURT	DAX	4084.00	4054.94	29.06
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10342.70	10340.21	2.49
LONDON	FT-SE 100	6235.30	6264.12	28.82
NEW YORK	DJ INDUSTRIAL	9998.15	9913.25	84.90
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	803.59	806.56	2.97
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	110.33	111.83	1.50
NEW YORK	4-9 900	124.23	120.75	3.48
TOKYO	NIKKEI-225	15327.56	15358.90	31.34
PARIS	CAC 40	4197.06	4141.90	55.16

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN

CURRENCY	ASK	BID
US DOLLAR	0.5730	0.5720
BRITISH STERLING	1.4210	1.4200
GERMAN MARK	0.3517	0.3507
SWITZERLAND FRAN	0.4178	0.4168
FRANCE FRANC	0.1621	0.1611
JAPAN YEN	0.0083	0.0073
HOLLAND GILDER	0.3459	0.3449
ITALY LIRA	0.0294	0.0284
EURO	0.2739	0.2729

PRECIOUS METALS

METAL	ASK	BID
GOLD	280.43	280.30
SILVER	5.00	4.93
PLATINUM	362.00	364.00

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

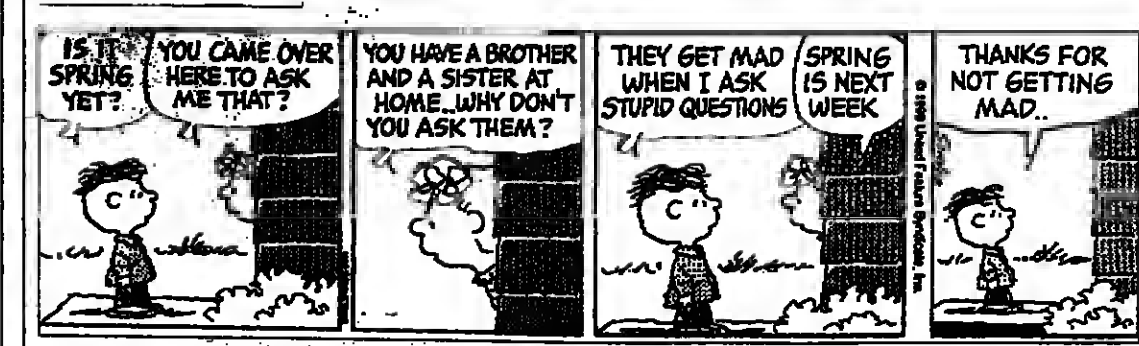
ACROSS

- Harbours
- Miss maker
- Artist's studio
- Separate
- Drag along
- Lamb's pen name
- Strikeness
- Can, province
- Trifling
- Be quiet!
- Sorority letter
- Brink of
- Christmas
- New Jack City co-star
- Part of Q&A
- Legislate
- Athenian lawgiver
- Underwrite
- Thyroid swelling
- Harrow's rival
- Author of "The Cloister and the Hearth"
- Pineapple brand
- Readers' decks
- "Maniac" singer
- Oodles
- Department head
- Spanish article
- facto
- Pull from a jug
- Liability
- Relax
- Div's song
- Actress Moran
- Data display
- Run-of-the-
- Boxon, once
- Novelist
- Glasgow
- Find a buyer
- Not so many
- Requirements

DOWN

- Urban greenery
- Mayberry kid
- Extreme anger
- Figurative use of a word
- Contender
- Roe source

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TURET

GERME

RUSTYD

BROJEB

Answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumbles: KNELL, JULEP, FLABBY, HAIRDO. Answer: Offered by a shabby telemarketer - A "PHONE-Y" DEAL.

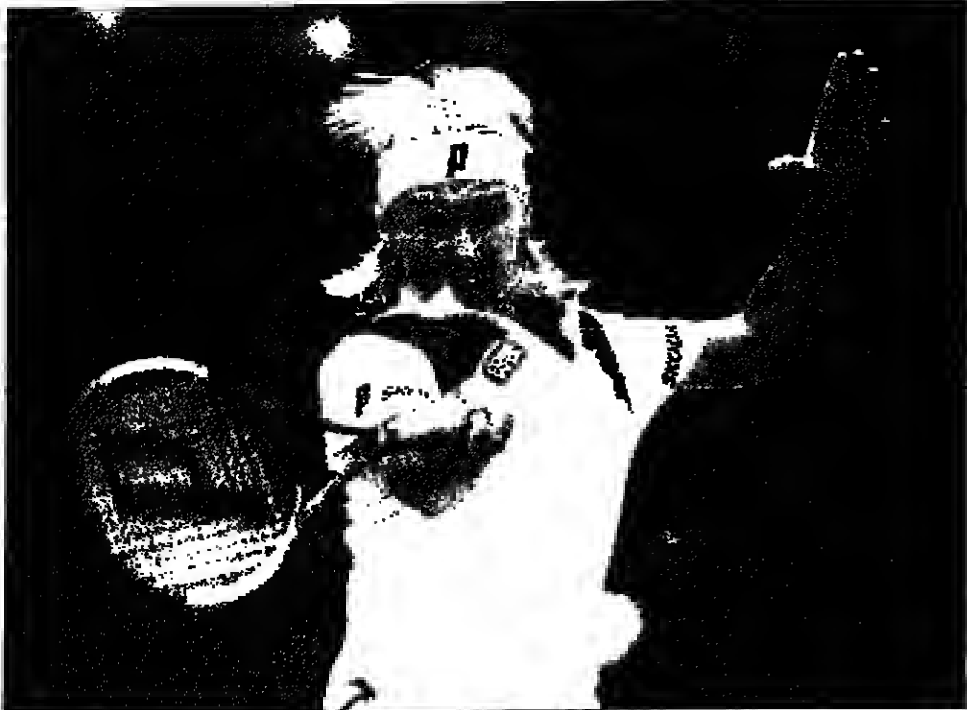
Hingis, Novotna reach Hilton Head semifinals

HILTON HEAD, South Carolina (AFP) — Top-ranked Martina Hingis of Switzerland advanced to the semifinals of the Family Circle Cup here Friday with a straight-sets victory over Natasha Zvereva of Belarus. Hingis downed Zvereva 6-0, 7-6 (7/0) to set up a clash with third-seeded Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic.

Novotna, the reigning Wimbledon champion, cruised past Henrieta Nagyova of Slovakia 6-2, 6-4. Sixth-seeded Patty Schnyder of Switzerland beat Elena Likhovtseva of Russia 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/3) to advance to a quarter-final meeting with seventh-seeded Russian Anna Kournikova. Kournikova's path was eased a little when unseeded German Andrea Glass retired with a left hip muscle strain while trailing 6-2, 2-1.

Hingis, 18, is making her first appearance at Hilton Head since earning the title here in 1997. The three-time defending Australian Open champion has not won a title since defeating South Africa's Amanda Coetzer at the Pan Pacific Open in Japan on February 7.

"The last three or four days, I didn't play my best tennis," Hingis said. "But



Jana Novotna

I've kind of managed to get through. Today, I think it was a much better effort."

Today's match with Zvereva marked their first meeting on clay in a WTA Tour event. They played on the surface in a Fed Cup zone-group match in 1995 with Zvereva winning 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

Hingis won two of their other three previous meetings, including a 6-3, 6-2 triumph last year in San

Diego.

Novotna matched her best effort at this event — a semifinal appearance in 1996. She is 3-0 in her career against Nagyova, including a 6-4, 2-6, 6-3 triumph at the Australian Open.

"I started to play well right from the beginning, and didn't give her a chance to come back into the match," Novotna said. "I

took her very seriously and played some solid claycourt tennis. I'm very pleased with my performance today."

Nagyova had Novotna on the ropes in Prague last year, leading 4-0 in the final set before losing. Kournikova, playing here for the first time, matched her best tournament result of the season, having also reached the semi-finals in Oklahoma City.

Sweden struggle as American veterans silence British

PARIS (AFP) — Reigning champions Sweden face an uphill battle to win their Davis Cup world group first round match with Slovakia after losing both opening singles games Friday.

Britain's hopes of proving their reemergence as a world power in tennis look doomed after American veterans Jim Courier and Todd Martin gave the States a 2-0 first day lead while Switzerland's blend of youth and experience proved a potent combination against Italy.

Slovakia took a 2-0 lead in their tie with the holders in the Swedish town of Trollhattan. Slovakia's Karol Kucera won the opening match 6-1, 7-6 (9/7), 2-6, 6-3, against Thomas Johansson in front of a crowd of 2,500.

And Dominik Hrbaty pressed home the fledgling European state's advantage with a shock 7-5, 4-6, 2-6, 6-2, 6-4 win over world number 15 Thomas Enqvist.

Johansson, chosen ahead of Magnus Gustafsson, blamed his own serve for the defeat as Sweden's grip on the trophy known reverently as the silver salad bowl loosened.

He said: "I served very badly and I crumbled when my opponent came back from 40-0 down in the second game of the fourth set."

But Sweden will take heart from the fact they were trailing Slovakia 2-0 last year in Bratislava at the same stage of the competition, before coming back to win 3-2 and going on to lift the Cup.

The United States made light of the absence of Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi when they took a commanding 2-0 lead over Britain in their Davis Cup World Group first round match in the English city of Birmingham.

Former world number one Jim Courier outlasted Tim Henman in a five-set thriller spanning four hours 12 minutes to give the Americans a flying start.

Henman, ranked seven in the world, saved four match points in an epic fourth set tiebreak but Courier recovered to take the fifth for a 7-6 (7/2), 2-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-7 (10/12), 7-5 victory.

World No. 8 Todd Martin followed that up by brushing aside Greg Rusedski 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 to put the Americans within sight of the second round. They will win the best-of-five encounter if they take Saturday's doubles.

Courier and Martin silenced a patriotic British crowd that was even reduced to applauding the veteran Americans.

American team captain Tom Gullikson was delighted, especially with Martin, and said: "Todd has got one of the top returns in the game and he showed it. He was on it from the first game."

Switzerland took a 2-0 lead over Italy and never looked back after experienced campaigner Marc Rosset saw off Gianluca Pozzi 7-6 (7/2), 6-4, 7-6 (7/0).

And emerging talent Roger Federer, dubbed the Martina Hingis of the men's game,



USA's Jim Courier fires another shot past Tim Henman on his way to victory over Henman in the opening singles of the Davis Cup between Great Britain and the USA in Birmingham. Jim Courier beat Tim Henman 7-6, 2-6, 7-6, 6-7, 7-5 (AFP photo)



Britain's Greg Rusedski is stretched by his American opponent Todd Martin during the second game of the Davis Cup tie in Birmingham. The British team of Rusedski and Tim Henman lost both their matches (AFP photo)



Brazil's Gustavo Kuerten returns the ball to Spaniard Alex Corraja during the Davis Cup match against Spain in Lerida. Kuerten won 6-3, 6-4, 7-5 (AFP photo)

pressed home the advantage, beating Davide Sanguinetti 6-4, 6-7 (3-7), 6-3, 6-4.

Federer said: "I really deserved this win. Maybe I made mistakes but I was always on the attack. It paid off."

Australia had mixed fortunes in their bid to avoid a repeat of last year's embarrassing defeat by Zimbabwe.

World No. 9 Mark Philippoussis lost the opener to Byron Black 6-3, 3-6, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 but Pat Rafter hit back against Wayne Black to square the tie 1-1, winning 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4) 6-2.

The Blacks face what could prove a crucial doubles clash with Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde on Saturday.

Holland's Richard Krajicek gave his country first blood with a comeback 3-6, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, 6-2 win over France's Jerome Golmard.

Former Wimbledon cham-

champion Krajicek seemed to thrive in front of another partisan crowd — this time French, coming from two sets down to send the small pocket of Dutch fans into wild celebrations in Nimes.

But France's Cedric Pioline, a former Wimbledon finalist, squared the match with a 6-2, 7-6 (7/0), 6-3 win over Paul Haarhuis.

France captain Guy Forget, a Davis Cup winner as a player, had kind words for Golmard.

Forget said: "I think Jerome missed his chance in the (third set) tie-break. That was the turning point. I know he is very disappointed but he has no reason to blush after his defeat."

Forget was clearly trying to lift Golmard, who will partner Guillaume Raoux in Saturday's doubles match and will face Haarhuis on Sunday. Spain and Brazil were all square after the opening sin-

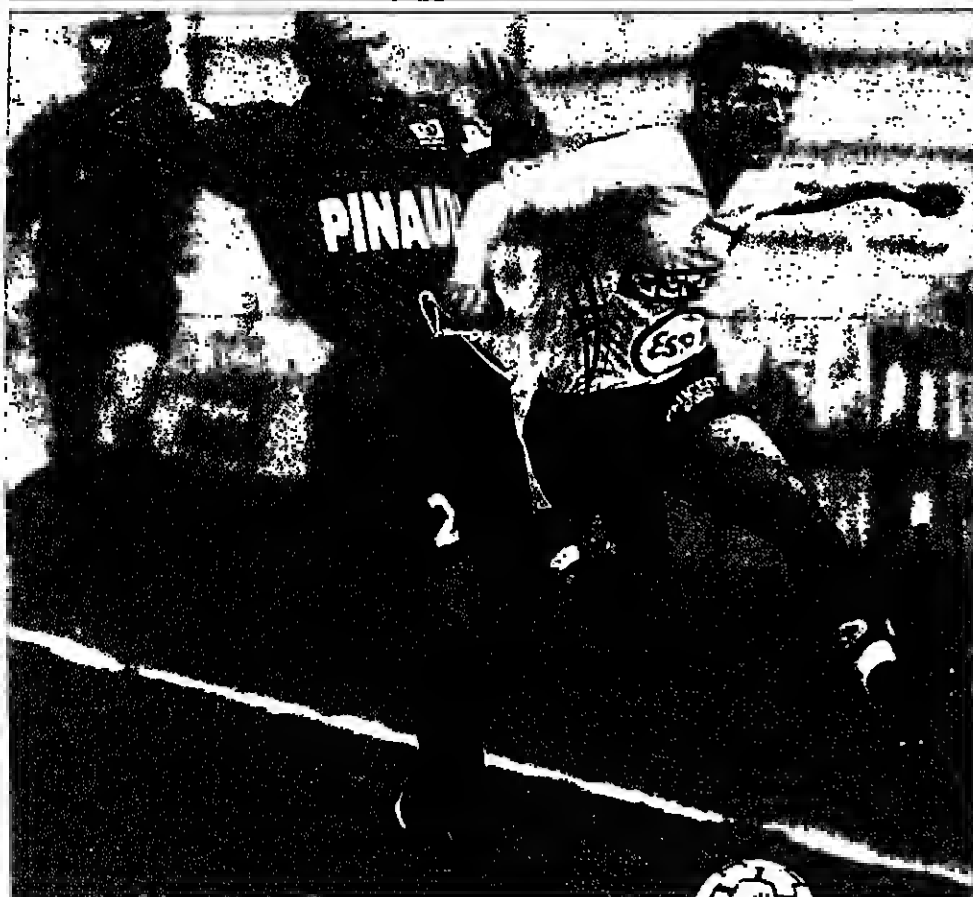
gles matches. Spain's Carlos Moya, ranked number two in the world, beat Fernando Meligeni 6-2, 6-7 (3/7), 6-0, 6-4.

But former French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten levelled the tie with a 6-3, 6-4, 7-5 win over Alex Corraja.

Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov restored parity for his country with a 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, 6-4 win over Germany's Nicolas Kiefer in Frankfurt.

German No. 1 Tommy Haas had earlier posted a 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-3, 2-6, 9-7 victory over another emerging star Marat Safin.

Belgium also finished all square in their Gent showdown with the Czech Republic. Xavier Malisse put the home side ahead with a 6-7 (6-8), 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 win over Bohdan Ulihrach but Filip Dewulf failed to press home the advantage, falling 7-5, 6-3, 6-2 to Slava Dosedel.



Pierre Alain Frau (R) of Sochaux gets past Philippe Brinquin of Rennes in Sochaux during their division one French soccer championship match (AFP photo)

Christie reaches final after all

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Britain's former Olympic sprint champion Linford Christie thought his Stawell Gift campaign was over after finishing third in his heat Saturday.

The 1992 Barcelona 100 metres champion had packed his bags and was about to leave Stawell's Central Park when he was told by officials that as one of the fastest losers he could qualify for Monday's semi-finals through a repechage heat.

In his heat, Christie, starting off a 1.25 metre handicap, finished behind local sprinter Rod Mathews (9.4 metres) who clocked the day's fastest time of 11.96 seconds.

Mathews is an odds-on favourite to win the 118th staging of the A&S£2,000 (\$33,000) Easter sprint classic, with the final on Monday.

Christie eased at the finish to be beaten into second by Victorian Damien Amato (8.75 metres) with respective times 12.35 seconds and 12.36.

Christie believed he had won his repechage heat and was surprised when told of his defeat by Brad Carter (10 metres) in lane eight.

"Didn't I win it?" Christie queried. "I really thought I'd won after I passed a runner and I didn't even see the other guy."

However, Christie's 12.28 seconds was sufficient to qualify him as one of the fastest repechage losers for Monday's semi-finals.

Marseille turn heat up on Bordeaux

PARIS (AFP) — Marseille's decision to field a weakened side against Monaco in the Cote d'Azur derby was vindicated as a second-half winner from Italian striker Fabrizio Ravanelli sent them back to the top of the table Friday with a 2-1 win.

The result puts the pressure on title rivals Bordeaux, who will go back top Saturday if they see off struggling Toulouse.

Marseille boss Roland Courbis rested Laureot Blanc, Robert Pires and Christophe Dugary, who had all featured in France's 2-0 win over Armenia Wednesday night.

Pires did come on as a substitute as did another French international striker Florian Maurice.

Courbis clearly had next Tuesday's UEFA Cup semi-final with Italian outfit Bologna in mind.

Twice Marseille sprung the home side's offside trap and twice they made it pay.

After 15 minutes Titi Camara raced clear of the Monaco rearguard to sidefoot home the opener for the title chasing with Fabien Barthez diving the wrong way.

But Monaco bit back after 28 minutes through Nigerian World Cup striker Viktor Ikpeba.

Ikpeba drove an angled shot past Marseille goalkeeper Stephane Porato after clever play from midfielder Ludovic Giuly.

But Marseille clinched the match three minutes after the

interval with Ravanelli's strike.

Again the Monaco defence was slow to step forward and Ravanelli controlled the ball with his left foot before lifting the ball over the advancing Barthez with his right boot.

Maurice, who started on the bench, had four chances to clinch the match.

First his angled lob drifted over and then he missed a clear chance after good work from Ravanelli.

He then forced two top-class saves from Barthez.

In Friday's other match Rennes boosted their campaign for a European place with a 3-0 romp at Sochaux, who are bottom and looking doomed.

Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre						
CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '1' Tom Hanks & Edward Burns ...in SAVING PRIVATE RYAN Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15	CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '2' RONIN Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 A LITTLE PRINCESS Shows: 12:30, 3:30	CINEMA TEL:5699238 PLAZA Leonardo Di Caprio ... in TITANIC Shows: 12:15, 3:30, 6:45, 9:45	CINEMA TEL:5677420 CONCORDE ALWAD MAHROUS BITA' AL WAZIR Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORDE 2 Patrick Swayze ... in BLACK DOG	CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Jackie Chan & Chris Tucker...in RUSH HOUR Shows: 12:30, 3:30 THE MAGIC SWORD Shows: 5:00	CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan...in YOU'VE GOT M@IL Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:45 THE MAGIC SWORD Shows: 12:30, 3:30	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 Starting on the Eid... the political satire AL SALAM AL Starting at 8:30 p.m

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Jordan beats Qatar again

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Kingdom's men's basketball team beat returned home Saturday after a three-match training camp in Doha, Qatar.

The Jordanian team won their last match 67-53. They had beaten their Qatari counterparts 75-70 in the second match and lost the first 79-71.

The Kingdom's team last week had a training camp in Beirut, Lebanon, where they won three matches and lost another three.

Following the team's results in Beirut, the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) decided to dismiss the Bulgarian coach and appointed Murad Barakat to take charge for the interim period.

Informed sources said the JBF was contacting a U.S. coach to supervise and prepare the team for the 9th Pan-Arab Games which will be held in Amman this summer.

World Youth Championship Nigeria held by Costa Rica in opener

LAGOS (AFP) — Hosts Nigeria blew a series of easy chances and an early lead to draw the opening match of the FIFA World Youth Championship against Costa Rica 1-1 here on Saturday.

Julius Aghahowa opened the scoring for Nigeria in the first ever FIFA Youth Cup staged in Africa, hammering in a low drive after 20 minutes of play dominated by the young Nigerians.

In a busy first half, the home team squandered a series of chances but came out aggressively again in the second half and appeared set to double their score on several occasions without result.

Both sides picked up yellow cards, with one for Costa Rican captain Allan Melendez, followed by another for Nigerian goalkeeper Sam Okoye after a wild challenge outside the area.

Okoye then made a second bad foul, chopping down an oncoming Costa Rican in the area four minutes from time and was lucky not to have been sent off by Belorussian referee Sergei Shumilov.

Melendez stepped up to the spot and put away the penalty awarded for the foul, sinking the Nigerians' hopes of a first win and the team was booed by the home crowd for the last few minutes on the pitch.

Croatian star speaks out over Kosovo

MILAN (AFP) — AC Milan's Croatian star Zvonimir Boban claimed on Saturday that NATO's bombardments of Yugoslavia are small beer compared to the pain suffered by his people during the civil war there.

Yugoslav footballers in Italy, led by Lazio's Sinisa Mihajlovic, have made well-publicised calls for an end to the NATO attacks and many were expected to wear black armbands on Saturday in protest.

But Boban, who was due to face Mihajlovic in a crunch Serie A match in Rome on Saturday afternoon, claimed bitterly that people appear to have forgotten the suffering of Croats under Serb fire.

The former Dynamo Zagreb midfielder particularly remembers his arrival at Italian club Bari in November 1991, amidst the fighting in his homeland.

"I remember the anxiety, the wait for news, the feeling of desperation at the death of a friend and the anger at being unable to do anything about it," he told Tuttosport newspaper.

"And it took years before the international community divided the aggressors, i.e. them, from those who had been attacked, i.e. us."

NATO's bombardments means that war has returned to Yugoslavia, but Boban said: "Just wait a moment. NATO is hitting factories and military targets, not the civilian population, which is what happened to us."

Asked about the reason for the bombardments, he said: "I am a Croatian, I don't want to talk about Serbia. I don't know the details, I only know as much as anyone else in Italy: I read the papers and watch the TV."

"But the Serbs ought to explain why, whenever there is a war, they are always involved."

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Pan-Arab Games is a tribute to King Hussein — Rawabdeh

Egypt to support, to take part in all events; 10 countries in paralympics

By Aileen Bannayan

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh Saturday underlined the government's resolve to upgrade sports in the Kingdom in general and support the upcoming 9th Pan-Arab Games in particular.

During his policy statement to Parliament, the premier noted that the success of the Pan-Arab Games would not only reflect Jordan achievements on the one hand but be a tribute to the late King Hussein who passed away on Feb. 7 after a long battle with cancer.

Meanwhile, Egypt has announced that it will take part in all 27 sports of the Pan-Arab Games and has put Egyptian help and expertise at the disposal of Jordanian officials preparing the Aug. 15-31 event.

The announcement was made during talks in Cairo where Minister of Sports and Youth Mohammad Khair Mamsar met Egyptian officials and briefed them on Jordan's preparations for hosting the event.

Following his meetings in Cairo, Mamsar said Jordan was seeking to host all Arab countries and would spare no effort to ensure that the Games — renamed Al Hussein Tournament in memory of King Hussein — would be a success.

"We hope that all 22 Arab flags will be raised in

Amman. Countries who might have certain difficulties like Mauritania, the Comoros and Djibouti will hopefully take part and send token delegations," Mamsar told the press.

He said the Executive Committee of the Council of Arab Sports Ministers will meet in Amman in June to review Jordan's preparation adding that he would soon visit Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf to discuss all these matters and brief them on the latest preparations.

Mamsar said a concerted effort by all would enable the Kingdom to stage the last Games of the century in a manner that would make it a success and worthy of carrying the name Al Hussein Tournament.

For the first time, 27 events will be on schedule after scrapping polo and adding yachting. The Games will also be followed by the first Arab Paralympics.

HRH Prince Firas Ben Ra'd was named as director of the Paralympics which will be held Sept. 9-20 and in which 10 countries have announced their participation: Bahrain, Tunisia, Sudan, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen and Jordan.

The events on schedule are basketball, weightlifting, athletics, table tennis for the physically handicapped, athletics and target

ball for the blind, athletics for the mentally handicapped and football for the hearing impaired.

Jordanian officials concur that the two pressing issues on the agenda of Al Hussein Tournament now were the competitive level of the Kingdom's teams and acquiring equipment to upgrade facilities with electronic timing machines and other requirements since apart from gymnastics, no equipment has been ordered from abroad yet.

On Saturday, Mamsar set April 25 as the final day for submitting tenders to buy equipment for the Games.

Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) officials have expressed concern that a host of administrative and organisational issues seem to have overshadowed the lax attitude of some federations overseeing the training of athletes — a key priority as host country.

The last regional event Jordan took part in was the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok in December, where Jordan only managed five medals, four by the taekwondo team. The rest of the athletes failed to even match their own national records.

The 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut witnessed the best Jordanian showing since the Pan-Arab Games were launched. Competing in 14 of the 20 events, Jordan finished 5th overall among 19

competing countries, taking a total of 40 medals, including 10 gold, 8 silver and 22 bronze medals.

Jordan's athletes gained more gold medals in Beirut than in all the past 7 Pan-Arab Games together in which they gained a total of 49 medals, including 7 gold, 16 silver, 26 bronze.

Nineteen countries have confirmed participation in the Amman Games: They are in addition to the host, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Palestine, Oman and Lebanon, Somalia, Bahrain, and the UAE.

The only Arab countries still not confirmed are Mauritania, Djibouti and the Comoros Islands.

Over 4,000 athletes are slated to take part in 27 of 62 Olympic events (compared to 19 events in 20 sports in the 1997 Beirut Games) and the Higher Organising Committee (HOC) announced that no event will be cancelled even if the number of competing teams is less than the minimum required.

The HOC headed by HRH Prince Faisal, announced that Jordanian medal winners will receive prizes and rewards that had never been offered before.

A French expert who was in charge of opening and closing ceremonies during the 1998 World Cup has



been contracted to provide expertise at a cost of JD250,000.

Rehearsals for the opening programme have started and involve over 7,000 students from various schools. Final rehearsals will be held at Amman International Stadium in July.

The official countdown will begin on May 15 when most of construction work is expected to be completed including maintenance at various venues.

Officials say construction of various venues is on schedule, mainly the JD4 million multi-purpose indoor stadium with a 7,000-seat capacity, the Olympic-size swimming pool, and maintenance work on the track and field stadium.

One of the major obstacles facing the Games was solved last month when UAE TV announced that it would lend Jordan Television the necessary equipment to cover the event after it was estimated that JTV needed JD6 million to acquire its own equipment.

After Beirut hosted the 1997 Games the decision to move the Games back to 1999 instead of 2001 made Jordan's task more difficult and it has had to bear a heavy financial burden because the Kingdom has had to prepare the Games in less than 20 months.

There has so far been no

direct aid to Jordan to help it cover the cost of around \$30 million of which the government had paid \$10 million and the IOC has set \$4 million.

Around JD3.5 million was expected in revenue (including \$1.5 million from TV coverage) and the Council of Arab Sports Ministers, which has so far granted \$500,000 in sponsorship, has promised to get additional funding from the Arab League and Gulf Cooperation Council.

Based on the promotion and marketing rights agreement with the Saudi firm RAF, Jordan will receive \$1.5 million in addition to 70 per cent of any additional income.

Additional sponsorship for Jordan's bid was secured by exempting Jordan from the 50 per cent Arab Sports Federation margin of profit on promotion and television coverage amounting to \$750,000.

Lebanon, which hosted the 8th Pan-Arab Games last summer, received \$28 million from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to help in construction of sports facilities destroyed during the civil war.

The Pan-Arab Games have only been held eight times: Alexandria in 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Morocco 1985, Damascus 1992 and Beirut 1997.

Orlando embarrass Bulls 115-68; Iverson on bench

CHICAGO (R) — The dismantling of the six-time NBA champion Chicago Bulls reached an embarrassing new low when they were dealt the worst loss in franchise history on Friday, a 115-68 setback to the Orlando Magic.

"We obviously didn't do one thing out there that we were pleased with," Chicago coach Tim Floyd said. "There were a lot of things we were displeased with. We had no effort and no intensity. We gave up easy baskets. Our concentration was poor."

"It is really embarrassing," Chicago guard Randy Brown said. "At the beginning of the year we knew what kind of situation we would be in. We knew there would be down periods in our season, but we never thought it would be the point of embarrassing."

The 47-point defeat topped a 158-114 loss to the Detroit Pistons at Cobo Hall on March 24, 1999, in the team's third season. Chicago's previous worst home loss came in a 121-80 setback to the Philadelphia 76ers on November 21, 1980, when the now-retired Michael Jordan was a senior in high school.

The Bulls dropped to 9-23 in the post-Jordan era, which also saw the mass exodus of forwards Scottie Pippen, Scott Burrell, Dennis Rodman and Jud Buechler, guard Steve Kerr and centre Luc Longley.

Orlando, which has the best record in the Eastern Conference (23-10), came within one point of matching its most decisive victory, a 152-104 romp at Milwaukee in 1995.

Penny Hardaway scored 24 points for the Magic, who posted the lopsided win without leading scorer Nick Anderson and Gerald

Wilkins.

In Portland, coming off his league-leading third suspension, Isaiah Rider paced seven players in double figures with 23 points as the Trail Blazers avenged an opening night loss with a 107-95 victory over the slumping Seattle SuperSonics.

Rider was suspended for entering the stands in Tuesday's setback at Golden State. Portland (25-6) have won eight of their last nine games and improved the NBA's best home record to 15-1 and best overall mark to 25-6.

In Minneapolis, Terrell Brandon had 21 points, a season-high 15 assists, eight rebounds and five steals to lead the Timberwolves to a 107-88 rout of the Denver Nuggets, who remained winless on the road this season.

Kevin Garnett was the main beneficiary of Brandon's pinpoint passing, scoring 28 points.

Joe Smith, who missed the previous three games due to a rib injury, was not with the team as he travelled home due to the death of his father earlier in the week. Sam Mitchell filled in admirably, scoring a season-high 21 points for Minnesota, which has won

four of its last five games.

In Philadelphia, the Cleveland Cavaliers scored an 85-80 victory over the 76ers as Allen Iverson apparently was benched for the final three quarters by Larry Brown following a sideline disagreement.

Brown said afterwards he had not put the league's leading scorer back in because he told him he was hurt. Iverson suffered a bruised right quadriceps three weeks ago against the Lakers.

In Phoenix, Glen Rice sank a 17-foot jumper with 7.1 seconds remaining as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Suns 91-90 in Marv Albert's first national broadcast in nearly two years. Rice scored 23 points and Shaquille O'Neal, who was on the bench in the

final minute, added 21 for the Lakers, who have won three straight and five of their last seven games.

Cliff Robinson scored a season-high 30 points and Jason Kidd collected 23 and nine assists for Phoenix, which concluded a 1-3 homestand.

Albert, who announced the game for the TNT cable network, was fired by NBC in 1997 when he pleaded guilty to a charge of misdemeanor assault and battery.

In Charlotte, Reggie Miller scored 18 points and Rik Smits added 17 as the Indiana Pacers held off the Hornets 87-81 to snap a three-game losing streak.

The Pacers held Charlotte to a season-low nine points in the third quarter, overcoming an eight-point half-

time deficit. Indiana had lost three straight one-point games.

In Atlanta, Dikembe Mutombo scored a season-high 24 points as the Hawks overcame the absence of leading scorer Steve Smith (sprained left knee) and rallied for an 84-81 victory over the Vancouver Grizzlies.

Shareef Abdur-Rahim, a native of nearby Marietta, Georgia, scored 24 points for the Grizzlies, who have lost 20 of their last 22 and are just 1-14 on the road.

In Boston, Dell Curry buried the go-ahead 3-pointer with 43 seconds to go as the Milwaukee Bucks

edged the Celtics 84-83. Ray Allen scored 19 points and rookie Robert Taylor added 15 for the Bucks, who have won four straight.

Antoine Walker led Boston with 23 points and 18 rebounds but missed a potential game-winning tip in the final seconds.

Paul Pierce scored 21 points for the Celtics, who lost their fifth straight at home.

At Golden State, Karl Malone scored 14 of his 23 points in the decisive third quarter as the Utah Jazz beat the Warriors for the 15th time in 16 meetings, 92-85.

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NATO force cuts part of railway between Serbia, Montenegro

SARAJEVO (AFP) — NATO forces in Bosnia blew up part of a railway linking Serbia to Montenegro to prevent Yugoslav forces from entering or transiting Bosnia, the NATO commander in Bosnia said Saturday.

The NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) "cut with explosives" a 10-kilometre segment of the railway near Rijeka, 80 kilometres east of Sarajevo, SFOR commander U.S. General Montgomery Meigs told a news conference.

Meigs said there were "indications that the railroad would be used by a military element to trespass the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina," which he said would be in violation of the Dayton peace accord.

Meigs added that the railroad was a primary link between Serbia and Montenegro, which together make up Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).

In Brussels, NATO accused Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic of plotting a coup in Montenegro.

Meigs said that SFOR troops came under fire during the operation to cripple the

railway link. Gunmen fired AK-47 machine-guns at the troops who returned fire, Meigs said, adding that there had been injuries.

Earlier Saturday, the Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA quoted eyewitnesses as saying that a person identified as Vidoje Tomic was killed by SFOR troops, but Meigs did not confirm the information.

"It's our intent to ensure that this railroad cannot be used until this period of tension and hostility is over," Meigs said.

SFOR in Sarajevo earlier issued a statement saying that the "action was taken as a prudent and precautionary measure to deny the military forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia entry into and transit through Bosnia-Herzegovina."

"SFOR will reopen the line with the cessation of hostilities," the statement added.

"The FRY government and military are well aware of the restrictions on entering Bosnia-Herzegovina territory and are equally aware that SFOR is ready and capable to intervene in the event of any

internal or external threat to peace in this country," the statement said.

In a statement issued Saturday in the Serb-held part of Sarajevo, the vice president of the Bosnian Serb entity, Mirko Sarovic, accused SFOR of acting "contrary to the Dayton agreement" and "beyond its mandate."

It alleged SFOR was providing logistics support for NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia.

On Saturday, Bosnian Serb television quoted a top local official in the area, Rato Rataj, mayor of nearby Rudno, as saying that the safety of SFOR troops "cannot be guaranteed."

According to the same source, SFOR troops have intensified their presence in the area after the incident.

Bosnia's air space was closed when NATO launched its air campaign on March 24. Some 30,000 SFOR troops oversee the implementation of the Dayton peace agreement that halted 1992-1995 war in Bosnia.

Southeastern Bosnia, where the incident occurred, is under the French command.



CAMBODIAN FOLK DANCER PERFORMS DURING CULTURE DAY: A Cambodian folk dancer performs during the nation's first Culture Day at the National Museum in Phnom Penh on Saturday. King Norodom Sihanouk presided over the ceremony and paid tribute to those who had struggled to rebuild Cambodia's artistic heritage, despite decades of war (Reuters photo)

International demos against NATO, Yugoslavia

ROME (AFP) — Up to 80,000 demonstrators took to the streets of Rome on Saturday against NATO bombings of Yugoslavia in response to a call for protest issued by Italian political parties, trade unions and peace groups.

The demonstrators, from all over Italy, chanted: "Enough of NATO bombing, no to war, yes to peace," during the peaceful demonstration in the centre of the Italian capital.

Italy is a NATO member, and many alliance aircraft have been taking off from Italian bases on bombing missions. Hundreds of pacifists demonstrated Saturday at the NATO airbase at Aviano.

The appeal for the demonstration came from a variety of organisations including the environmental group Greenpeace, Pax Christi, and left-of-centre parties.

In Belgrade itself more than 15,000 people rallied to denounce the attacks following a night in which two police nerve centres were destroyed. A symphony orchestra entertained the crowd.

Belgraders have been assembling at Republic Square in the city centre every day at midday since last Sunday to protest the attacks. Organisers plan to continue daily concerts till the bombing stops.

Demonstrators had target signs pinned to their chest in mockery of their NATO assailants.

Vendors sold postcards with pictures of a U.S. Stealth bomber downed during a raid, with the words: "Greetings from Serbia."

"If addressee untraceable please return card to White House," they read. Cafes near the concert square were packed. "It's our way of exercising fear of bombing," a young mother of a two-year-old explained.

In Vienna some 3,000 Albanians bearing the red flag of Kosovo held a peaceful anti-Serb demonstration at the Heidenplatz Square while at Schwarzenberg Square in another part of the city centre Serbs held a rival rally demanding "Bill Clinton's scalp."

Up to 1,600 emigre Serbs and Swedish sympathisers demonstrated for the eleventh consecutive day in Stockholm against the bombings.

Oerjan Svedberg, spokesman of the ex-communist Party of the Left which provides parliamentary support to the ruling Social Democrats, said "by its behaviour the government of Prime Minister Goran Persson shows it does not understand the long-term consequences of the bombing."

Sweden, a neutral, has avoided criticism of the bombings, saying only it regretted that the NATO action did not have a United Nations Security Council mandate.

About 200 mainly elderly communist supporters protested in the Ukrainian Black Sea port of Sevastopol against the bombing with placards reading: "Hands off Yugoslavia."

In Karachi, scores of Pakistanis demanded the arrest and trial of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for "genocide and ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo.

The protesters, including children carrying placards, urged the NATO command to dispatch ground forces to Kosovo to stop the killings of the mainly Muslim ethnic Albanian community.

Several thousand Greek Cypriots demonstrated in Nicosia to protest the NATO air strikes.

The NATO action has provoked strong opposition from Greek Cypriots across the political spectrum who feel a strong sense of solidarity with the Serbs, who are fellow Orthodox Christians.

The Greek government in Athens has also called for a halt to the bombing, thus breaking ranks with fellow-NATO members.

Some 200 Palestinian students demonstrated in Nablus on the West Bank against ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

The demonstrators, from the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), burned the Yugoslav flag and appealed to Arab countries to support the Muslim population of Kosovo.



Hungarian police search for bear

BUDAPEST (AFP) — Hungarian police said Saturday they were searching for a tamed bear that had escaped from a film shooting in the north of the country. "Luiz" the female bear escaped Friday from an Austrian film crew that had hired her for a film on the lives of bears in the northeastern Buekk mountains. She was seen near a trout farm close to the industrial city Miskolc, 180 kilometres northeast of Budapest, newspaper reports said. She fled along with a fellow bear after being frightened by a dog, but the other bear returned to the crew on its own, the reports said. Police warned against approaching "Luiz" despite the fact that she is friendly and likes humans, they said.

'Dognapper' snatched after 3-month probe

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Argentine police have arrested a man suspected of "dognapping" numerous dogs and demanding up to \$1,500 in ransom, police said. "He would steal the dogs and afterward call their owners and ask them for money to return them," Juan Jose Eschettino, second in charge at the police's fraud division, told Reuters. Police said the suspected "dognapper" would ask from between \$300 to \$1,500 for each dog, depending on its breed and pedigree. It is still unknown if the suspect was part of a larger dognapping gang, Eschettino said. "It's an odd crime, so it's difficult to determine if there was anyone else involved," he said.

Vice women call Youth Cup protest

LAGOS (R) — A group of Nigerian prostitutes has threatened nude protest at World Youth Cup soccer matches after being banned from hotels by tournament organisers, a local newspaper said. The Prime Minister's office said quoted Charity Emevon of the Association of Practising Prostitutes of Nigeria as saying hundreds of women would march naked through the streets if authorities did not how in their demand to be able to operate freely. "In every country, especially in developed countries, there are prostitutes. It is not a new thing. It is only in Africa or Nigeria that prostitutes are looked at as outcasts," Emevon was quoted as saying.

Dog nurses five newborn lion cubs

BEIJING (AFP) — Five newborn lion cubs at a zoo in the northern Chinese city of Shijiazhuang are being wet-nursed by a dog, the state media has reported. The cubs' mother, Xinxin, was unable to nurse the litter after giving birth to them on Thursday. Xinhua news agency said late Friday. The six-year-old lioness had given birth to 11 other cubs previously, but they became ill after being fed with artificial food that weakened their immune systems, said zookeeper Wang Wanhua. The zookeepers, who decided dog milk would be suitable for lion cubs, started to look for a wet-nurse dog through the local media soon after Xinxin became pregnant. "The dog lost her own baby just three days ago, maybe that is the reason why she looks rather maternal to the lion cubs," Wang said.

Record claimed for paper clip chain

SINGAPORE (AP) — Sixty Singaporean volunteers worked for 24 hours to complete on Saturday the world's longest paper clip chain at 31,572 kilometres, organisers said. The chain, bunched up and formed into a rectangle on a platform at a shopping centre, beat the previous record of 27,189 kilometres, set by students from Singapore's Nanyang Technological University. Organisers said the effort was monitored by a representative from the Guinness Book of World Records.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israelis close off West Bank village

DIR ABU MISHAL (AFP) — The Israeli army has closed off the Palestinian West Bank village of Dir Abu Mishal and arrested 12 of its inhabitants, residents who got through the army blockade said Saturday. They said the Israeli army closed off the entrance to the village, some 20 kilometres northwest of Ramallah, on Wednesday and have arrested a dozen young Palestinian men. The Israeli army issued a statement Saturday confirming the action, saying the men had been arrested after an Israeli child was stoned and wounded on Wednesday night. "The army arrested 12 men who are currently under police investigation, and the road blocks that the army put up after the incident on Wednesday night are still in place," it said.

PNA agents not guilty in Fateh killing

JERICHO (AFP) — A Palestinian military court found two military intelligence agents not guilty of the killing of a Fateh activist who was shot dead in a demonstration last year. Fateh officials said on Saturday, Wassim Tarifi, 17, a supporter of the mainstream Palestinian faction Fateh, was killed in October during a demonstration against the raiding of a Fateh office in Ramallah by members of the Palestinian military intelligence. The Palestinian court held Saturday's hearing behind closed doors in Jericho and no information was available about the proceedings. Human rights organisations said the hearings were held in camera because the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) feared the verdict would lead to violent protests.

Amir denied holiday leave from jail

TEL AVIV (AP) — The assassin of Yitzhak Rabin has been denied a vacation from jail for the Jewish holiday of Passover, Israel's prison authority said Saturday. Jewish extremist Yigal Amir shot the late prime minister and Nobel Peace Prize winner three times at a peace rally in Tel Aviv on Nov. 4, 1995 to prevent the transfer of land to the Palestinians. Amir was sentenced to life in prison and is being held in solitary confinement. Amir had requested that he be freed for part of the seven-day Passover holiday so he could spend time with his family, said Prisons Authority spokeswoman Orit Messer-Harel. But the authority and public security ministry did not even consider the request since vacation for those serving life sentences is an option only after they have served seven years or their sentences have been reduced, the television added.

OIC to discuss Kosovo crisis

TEHRAN (AP) — Foreign ministers from the 55-nation Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) will discuss the Kosovo crisis on Wednesday in Geneva, Tehran Radio reported Saturday. The ministers will search for ways to help end the crisis and to speed efforts to get humanitarian aid to refugees, the radio quoted Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi as saying. Iran currently holds the OIC chairmanship. Muslim nations have condemned Serb actions against Kosovo Muslims, and many have pledged to send relief supplies to more than 120,000 fleeing Albanian refugees.

Syrian president to visit Russia

MOSCOW (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Assad is to visit Moscow on April 13, Interfax news agency quoted Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov as saying Friday. Ivanov also said that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat would visit Moscow on April 5.

Iran court charges liberal cleric

TEHRAN (R) — A special Iranian court has formally charged a liberal cleric detained in February with spreading false information and lies about the country's Islamic system, newspapers reported on Saturday. They said Mohsen Kadivar, held after writing a series of articles critical of Iran's ruling clergy, was charged by a special court for Shiite clerics. "[Kadivar] has compared the holy Islamic system with the [former] imperial regime and has concluded that there has only been a nominal change from an imperial to an Islamic system," the daily Salam quoted the prosecutor as saying in a statement. The prosecutor accused Kadivar of abusing his clerical garb and helping the "sworn enemies" of Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution. Kadivar, a supporter of reformist President Mohammad Khatami, was arrested on Feb. 27 by the secretive Special Clergy Court — a body denounced by many reformists as unconstitutional. He has asked for a public trial with a jury.

Russia slams U.S. sanctions over Syria arms deal

MOSCOW (R) — Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeev on Saturday condemned a U.S. decision to slap sanctions against three Russian firms for supplying anti-tank weapons to Syria. Russian news agencies reported.

"I condemn the introduction of such sanctions," Inter-Tass news agency quoted Sergeev as saying. "They are groundless."

U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said on Friday that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had determined that the Russian government was involved in the weapons transfer, but waived sanctions on that front, thus preserving \$90 million in U.S. aid to Moscow which otherwise would have been put in jeopardy.

"In accordance with the law, the secretary has determined that Russia has transferred lethal military equipment, specifically anti-tank guided missiles, to Syria. She has decided to sanction the three Russian firms directly involved," he told reporters.

Washington accuses Syria of sponsoring terrorism.

Rubin identified the three firms facing sanctions as the Tula Design Bureau, Volsky Mechanical Plant and Tazilochmarsh.

The new sanctions come at a time when NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia over its province of Kosovo has created serious tensions between Moscow and Washington.

Earlier this year, the United States imposed sanctions on three Russian institutes for helping Iran, which Washington accuses of sponsoring terrorism and of trying to acquire nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Iranian press blasts France in wine row

TEHRAN (AFP) — Tehran's press on Saturday lashed out against France following President Mohammad Khatami's postponement of his trip to Paris due to a wine row.

The conservative English-language paper Tehran Times castigated Paris saying that "the governments claiming to be advocates of civilisation are not ready to respect the valuable ideas of other cultures and civilisations... by refusing to respond to their carnal desires of drinking even for once," the paper said.

The headline paper Jomhuri Islami said: "President Mohammad Khatami's decision to postpone the trip is based on France's disrespect towards Islamic codes."

No country should "expect the Islamic republic to give up and sacrifice its Islamic values for wrong European traditions," the paper said, adding that "France has no intention of promoting bilateral relations on the basis of mutual respect and insists on holding the upper hand."

The Kayhan paper criticised the French authorities' "lack

of attention," while another conservative daily, Ressalat, denounced the "arrogant behaviour" of Paris.

But pro-Khatami Sobh-e-Emrouz accused conservative opponents in Iran of "using this incident for political purposes."

According to the paper, during the last Tehran Friday prayers unidentified persons distributed pictures showing Khatami during his official state visit to Italy in March.

The pictures drew attention to several crystal glasses on the dinner table during the visit, implying the presence of alcoholic beverages.

The paper denounced the false implications asserting that no alcoholic beverages were served during the official dinner.

Khatami's office announced Monday the postponement of his ground-breaking visit to France this month, saying that the two parties "have not been able to reach agreement on the programme for the visit."

The French had refused to back down on the grounds that it was international protocol for foreign guests to adapt to the culture of the host country.

Iraq accuses U.S., U.K. of strangulation tactics

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq's oil ministry said Saturday that the first bombing of the sanctions-hit state in nearly two weeks had failed to halt its oil exports through the Gulf despite damaging a pipeline station.

As the news emerged, Baghdad accused Washington and London of wanting to deprive Iraq of its oil resources by bombing vital pipeline monitoring sites inside the country.

"Crude export operations continued Saturday... the main thing is that the flow of crude is assured and that the oil tankers are filled" at the Mina Al Bakr port, an oil ministry spokesman told AFP without elaborating.

The head of the station, Kifah Karmel Rawi, told AFP that "there was a brief halt in the pumping, but our men succeeded in starting the emergency system and the oil flow resumed at its normal rate."

He said the pipeline had a capacity of 1.6 million barrels per day (bpd), while Mina Al Bakr had a capacity of 1.2 million bpd. But he did not say what the current flow rate was through the pipeline.

The station is located near a residential area in Hamdan, some 13 kilometres from the southern city of Basra.

A small wooden building and a metal pylon were all that was left of the station Saturday, although the nearby pipeline was undamaged.

Two of the three buildings that made up the site were reduced to rubble, with twisted fragments of equipment, including dials and wires, spread out across the ground.

A technician and a guard were injured in Friday's attack, officials at the station said.

Washington on Friday said U.S. planes had attacked two sites in southern Iraq after three Iraqi aircraft entered the no-fly zone there.

More than half of Iraq's oil exports pass through Mina Al Bakr, while most of the rest goes through a pipeline from northern Iraq to the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

Baghdad's Al Iraq newspaper on Saturday accused Washington and London of wanting to deprive the sanctions-hit state of its oil resources by bombing vital pipeline monitoring sites inside the country.

"By bombing Iraq, the Americans and British are hitting hard the humanitarian oil-for-food programme which already only meets 20 per cent of the population's needs," Al Iraq said.

Scots prepare to receive Lockerbie suspects

CAMP ZEIST (R) — Scottish legal officers were making final preparations on Saturday to take into custody in the Netherlands two Libyans accused of the 1998 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people.

United Nations legal adviser Hans Corell set off for Libya on Friday to collect the men and bring them to the Netherlands, where they will answer charges before a Scottish court.

The trial will mark the end of a 10-year manhunt and pave the way for the U.N. to lift punitive sanctions against Libya.

The U.S. and Britain say they have

evidence that the two men planted a bomb inside a suitcase that exploded aboard Pan Am Flight 103 on Dec 21, 1988, over Lockerbie.

A total of 270 people were killed in the air and on the ground, most of them Americans, including 35 Syracuse University students coming home for Christmas from their studies in London.

Over 100 Scottish police were on hand at Camp Zeist, the former U.S. military base chosen as the venue, and scores of press massed outside the area on the outskirts of the sleepy central Dutch village of Soesterberg.

"The site is now complete and ready to accept the suspects. We are ready to take

them at any time. I am reasonably confident it is going to happen on or before April 6," a Scottish office spokesman told reporters outside the camp.

Libya has pledged to complete the surrender of the men by Tuesday, after months of nail-biting negotiations with the United States and Britain via the United Nations.

On their arrival in the Netherlands, the men are to be taken into custody by Dutch police. They will then be "extradited" to Scottish police and ultimately stand trial before a Scottish court, sitting at Camp Zeist.

The Scottish office spokesman said the extradition process could be over in

minutes, or take several months.

In Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said his country would send a foreign ministry delegation to Libya on Sunday to attend the handover of the wanted men — Abdul Basset Ali Mohammad Al Megrahi and Lamen Khalifeh Fhimah. Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid is also expected to attend.

Precise details of Corell's mission to Tripoli remained shrouded in secrecy. "We will only get the information [on the timing of the handover] at the last moment, when it is absolutely clear what is happening," a U.N. spokeswoman said.